

WIN 2 FREE TICKETS TO A JOAN ARMATRADING CONCERT!

(CONSOLATION PRIZES •• HER LATEST ALBUM)

You could win two tickets for any of these concerts by answering the questions below.

- 1 What is Joan Armatrading's favourite comic?
- 2 What is the Family Planning Association economising on?
- 3 Which city had a women's festival in October?
- 4 What, according to a judge, is "a very precious thing"?
- 5 Whose drawings and oil paintings are going to be exhibited at the National Museum of Wales?
- 6 When did Britain's longest equal pay strike end?
- 7 Why did a woman buy enough ingredients for 75 ice-cream sundaes?
- 8 How would history have been different (see page 47)?

All the answers are in this issue.

ENTRY FORM

NAME

ADDRESS

CONCERT OF CHOICE

CONCERT DATES

☆ Edinburgh	Dec 6 ☆
☆ Glasgow	Dec 8 ☆
☆ Manchester	Dec 10 ☆
☆ Birmingham	Dec 11 ☆
☆ London	Dec 12 ☆
☆ Nottingham	Dec 14 ☆
☆ Brighton	Dec 17 ☆
☆ Southampton	Dec 18 ☆

Send your answers on a separate piece of paper together with the entry form below, to us at 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. Please write on the back of your envelope the city of the concert you want to go to. Members of the collective are not eligible!

The 21 week Equal Pay strike at Trico's has been won by the women. The settlement is not perfect; the rise is not backdated to January 1, when Equal Pay became law. But the women stuck together and got what they wanted.

Most significantly they won it through industrial action, after an industrial tribunal passed judgement against them on one-sided evidence. The women and their union, the AUEW, boycotted it because they knew from the record of tribunals then, that they would not stand a chance. Indeed the tribunal, which went ahead without them, ruled that because the men once did nightwork, they deserved a bonus for the rest of their lives. Now the women earn the same, and think very differently . . .
(see News report p.20)

Cover

December 1976 Cover
Joan Armatrading in
Washington, USA,
photographed by Neal Preston

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Spare Ribs Ltd and the author.
Spare Rib is published by Spare
Ribs Ltd, 27 Clerkenwell Close,
London EC1. Telephone 01-253

9792. Printed by Carlisle Web
Offset Ltd, Newtown Trading
Estate, Carlisle CA2 7NR.

Typeset by Caroline MacKechie.
Distributed by Moore Harness
Ltd, 31 Corsica Street, London
N5. ISBN 0306 7971.

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Advertising Sellout?

*Dear *Spare Rib*,

We were sorry to see that you gave space to the advertisement for the "Sex Maniac's Diary" (SR 51). We think it was exploitative. It traded on people's insecurities because of its competitive approach to sex, and treated sex as titillation.

It is just these attitudes that *Spare Rib* has tried to undermine in the past, and we feel as feminists that it is important to undermine them, not encourage them. Sexual competitiveness will exist as long as there is money to be made from it, but that is no reason for *Spare Rib* to aid and abet the process. Sexual competitiveness is a root cause of sexism in society, affecting both men and women. The fact that the advertisement did not overtly discriminate between men and women is an irrelevancy. (Though it is interesting that a 'granny' is 'naughtier than a grandad'.)

We understand that a commercially viable magazine needs to create advertising revenue, but we feel it would be better for *Spare Rib* to go bust — an honest failure, than for it to accept advertising of this kind.

Alternatively we feel many *Spare Rib* readers would prefer to pay a little more for their magazine, rather than accept either of these alternatives.

In sisterhood
Celia, Kath and Jessy
Swansea

We've received a lot of angry letters about the Sex Maniac Diary advertisement which was in issues 51 and 52. Advertising decisions are often very difficult. It pays for printing 24 pages of the magazine. There are advertisements that we definitely would not carry, but there's a host of borderline cases. After rejecting the original artwork for this one, I felt (note that this was not a collective decision but made in haste) that the ad itself was silly but not specifically offensive to women. Others disagreed, but it was then too late. Rose.

Sour Lessons

Dear *Spare Rib*,

I am writing to thank/congratulate you on the sensitive article on babysitting (SR 51), especially for Michelene Wandor's comments which spoke for a lot of my own experience in and around the revolutionary Left.

I am a full-time student and parent and feel that in the

nearly two years of my son's life I've learned quite a sour lesson about the subjective commitment to the liberation of parents, of my comrades and sisters. People mean well, or think they do, but . . . vague enthusiasm about little kids, and vague offers of 'babysitting' — 'anytime' . . . tend to recede before specific requests or demands. And as your North London IS comrade pointed out, this is bound to happen; non-parents simply can't think themselves into the very difficult situation of the parent, particularly on the question of piecing together little scraps of time to do all the things that can't be done with kids around. It just isn't real to them.

I used to think when girls I knew became mothers and disappeared from public life, 'whatever happened to her?' Now, alas, I know what happened.

I was impressed, though, by the couple of non-parents interviewed who have tried to make that imaginative leap. It's too bad more don't, since everybody would benefit: lots of children are quite nice people, worth getting to know, and they like getting to know people other than their parents. And their parents would certainly like to see people other than them, once in a while.

Yours
Nora Hickey
Oxford

Feminist Ethics

Dear *Spare Rib*,

Julie Sheppard (Letters page, SR 52) seems to have missed the vital starting point of the article on babysitting (SR 51), which is that the so far formulated demand on child care (24-hour nurseries) cannot cover the many, many times children must be cared for in their own homes — when they're ill, evenings, weekends, which is an important time for friendship, pleasure, political activity. Of course she is right when she says that the problem must be located 'at the level of social relations', if by that she means the constraints which maintain parent/mother-

hood within the nuclear family. But by saying 'Hopefully many of these problems would be eliminated in a different kind of society — a society in which collective decisions had a material force in the community', surely she doesn't mean that until socialism, those of us with children should passively accept the limitations on us?

As long as most people live in nuclear family-type set-ups (and I suspect that will be for a very long time to come) babysitting will remain a 'privatised', individual act; the real problem is now to back it up by an analysis and a sense of collective responsibility — which could probably only happen if babysitting is somehow organised in a group way.

It is curious that in her final paragraph she recognises that 'people are in as much need of liberation from the tyranny of clinging and dependent children', and doesn't appear to understand the resentment among feminist mothers that the most active among feminists tend to be the childless women who are simultaneously (quite rightly) protesting loudly at the oppression women experience in the family. Who are these 'people'? Aren't parents/mothers people?

I think part of the problem which leads to resentment on both sides, is the gap between certain tenets of feminist ideology which remain rather undeveloped in both theory and practice — 'the personal is political' and 'a woman's right to choose'. Both these imply some kind of balance between individual and collective 'choice' and 'responsibility'; and we have really not gone very far towards mapping out ethical guidelines to feminist principles. Julie Sheppard is right to say that simple guilt-inducing outbursts don't get very far, but neither does the kind of ostrich-like attitude she adopts.

Michelene Wandor

Babysitting — One Solution

Dear *Spare Rib*,

We would like to support

your article on 'Babysitting . . . a very private problem' with an attempt at a small scale solution. We advertised in 'Shortlist' (SR 49) our willingness to organise creches. As a result one of us is doing a fortnightly creche for a neighbourhood nursery so that the parents can meet uninterrupted, and is babysitting one night a week. We are both doing occasional creches for local groups. We don't feel we could handle much more on a regular basis ourselves, although we can still do occasional things.

However, we would like to hear from people (particularly childless men) who would be willing to help run creches, and/or do regular child-caring or babysitting. We would also like to hear from more people or groups who would like such services provided. It would help if people described a little of their ideas about such arrangements, so that we can get a discussion going and perhaps hold a meeting. The aim would be to link suitable people up with each other as an ongoing alternative to childminders/Babysitters Unlimited, etc.

Our own ideas are that: this is a meaningful political activity for men who profess anti-sexism; the service should be free, but fares paid; regular arrangements are desirable so that confidence is built up all round; criteria of eligibility need to be discussed, e.g. we are not helping someone who wants to go to a right-wing meeting; and, being with children is good for people who are not usually with children, especially men, and it can be fun.

Brad
13 Sandringham Rd E8
tel 249 3768
Nigel
32 Parkholme Rd E8
tel 254 5821

Exploited Playleaders

*Dear *Spare Rib*,

In the news section of the October edition (SR 51), it was reported that the Assistant Playleaders in Hammersmith had won a £6 rise through the endeavours of their union NALGO. In fact the £6 which we now receive is entirely due to the 1975 incomes policy which gave all workers an extra £6 a week.

In fact the situation in Hammersmith has reached an impasse with the council refusing to negotiate with the union. We demanded the right to be treated as other council employees are treated, with fair conditions and a recognised grade. But the Council barely recognises our existence.

Similar situations exist in



other boroughs; some employ playleaders on sessional rates with no holidays or sick pay. The Councils argue that the playleaders are only part-time and so not entitled to job security or benefits. And the situation will get worse because of the public spending cuts.

If anyone is interested in fighting the cuts in play and fighting for recognition of playleaders and their work, please will they contact me. Yours in sisterhood
Susan Simons
Hammersmith Playleaders Rep (NALGO)
52 Brook Green
Hammersmith W6

Who decides our identity?

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Today I sent off a subscription to *Spare Rib*. I filled in the form with the name I use all the time. But to sign the cheque, I had to use my husband's surname. My bank — the Coop — will not allow me to write cheques in my own, i.e. "maiden" name.

Now I have had this account for 14 years. When I opened it, I was single. When I married, the account was renumbered in accordance with my "new" surname. Only my earnings have ever been paid into it. Three years ago, I handed in my first book, and decided once and for all to return to using the name I was given at birth. Apparently there is no legal obligation on a woman to take her husband's surname on marriage, or vice-versa. My husband is not offended by my decision, and we are both acutely aware of the patriarchy behind the naming of our children, where we have no legal choice.

This cuts no ice with the Coop Bank — although they happily accept cheques made out to Celia Berridge! I feel this is a subtle put-down, a reminder that women have only as much identity as men will permit them to have. Is this an offence against the Sex Discrimination Act?
Yours sisterly
Celia Berridge
Greenwich

Cheated

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I am, after nine months, awaiting a court hearing to ascertain my equity in a mutual home as a common-law wife of six and a half years; after three promises of marriage and the obvious protection of the Matrimonial Act of 1973.

My common-law husband, though well able to assist me financially, his salary is £8,500 plus car and expenses, is unwilling to help. Even though for the last seven years

I have given his children a settled home, following a divorce I was not involved in; his wife had left him before I met him which was after I had been nursing a dying husband.

After 33 years of full-time employment as a manager, I gave this up on the promises of married security. I contributed financially as well as being a wife and accepted step-mother to his children.

The break is now definite (he has another widow with more to offer than myself); I walked out with my own furniture under severe provocation by my future step-son. My son and I now have to go to court to claim back the money we put into the house and to get recompense for the work we put into it; it will probably end with me being without a home at all.

Do you not feel that some legislation is needed so that a common-law wife of so many years (say, five years or more) would have protection. I gave up a secure job with a good salary for false promises, and at the age of 53 am now finding it very difficult to obtain suitable employment.

Yours sincerely
Jean Stevens
Lymington

Strategies for Coping

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
We live in a very poor inner city area where most women are practically untouched by feminist ideas, and obviously we think a lot about ways they could be reached. *Spare Rib* offers a lot of articles that interest us, because we are already in the women's movement, but not so many that might encourage say a poor, tired depressed 'housewife' with three children to pick up a copy in our local doctor's surgery. Very few women round here have much chance of radically changing their situation, however much we hope they will, and we would like the magazine to carry more articles about strategies for coping with situations as they are now. More articles too on things which directly concern them — like what is happening now in their children's schools.

In sisterhood
Penny Toller, Hilary Renwick
Nottingham

Going Forward

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
Thanks for supplying *Spare Rib* over the last year. Every single issue has provoked so much extra thought that it was too much to write a letter. To start with I could never work out a priority of one subject over another, and then just one

subject leads me into such depth that I felt I couldn't begin to write. However the magazine has led to a lot of writing. I became part of *Feministo*, sent away for or got hold of various things reviewed, such as Monica Sjoo's *Cosmic Mother* which led me a step higher in belief of women's truth.

I don't push what I call my feminist views very much, I don't know why. My own ideas seem 'bigoted' even to me. I believe women are on a higher plain than men, but I hesitate to use the word superior. This belief is born of experience and observation. Women have such a struggle to live, to just get to the same place as men; or worse, much worse, to get the same respect.

Although I don't push my extreme beliefs, I go steadily forward, deepening my feelings, questioning myself and reassessing; feeling more sure, mostly with the backing of other women, especially through literature such as *Cosmic Mother* and *Spare Rib*, as contact with other women is limited.

The steady incoming of *Spare Rib* to my house picks me up if I'm wavering or downhill and keeps my reassurance and self-confidence building. Of course, I have criticisms in some ways of most issues, but on generalising can't remember them. One thing, I would really like it if more natural healing was included in the Health section. I like to be reassured that women do recognise in themselves the essentials for survival of the world, sisterly strength, compassion and so much more.
Yours in sisterhood
Hebden Bridge
Yorks

Colouring Language

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Birmingham — 'a real black spot' indeed! (SR 50)

This 'Interracial Books for Children Bulletin' extract helps to show that while we may not be able to change the words in our language, we can definitely change our usage of them:

"Some may BLACKLY accuse her of trying to BLACKEN the English language to give it a BLACK eye by writing such BLACK words. They may DENIGRATE her by accusing her of being BLACK-HEARTED, of having a BLACK outlook on life, of being a BLACKGUARD which would certainly be a BLACK MARK against her.

She challenges the purity and innocence (WHITE) of the English language. She doesn't see things in BLACK and WHITE terms, for she is



a WHITE woman if there ever was one. However, it would be a BLACK day when she would not "CALL A SPADE A SPADE", even though some will suggest a WHITE woman calling the English language racist is like "THE POT CALLING THE KETTLE BLACK". While many may be NIGGARDLY in their support, others will be honest and decent — and to them she says, that's very WHITE of you."

Best wishes
Rosemary Stones
Children's Rights Workshop

Reluctant F.P.A.

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Thinking that I ought to take note of the many Family Planning Association adverts, I decided to go to one of the clinics in North Islington. There I was told I could only make an appointment by phoning up. So I went away and phoned up. "No, sorry, you can't make an appointment here, you have to ring up our headquarters at Pirie Street Health Centre." The following day I duly phoned up and had the following conversation:

"Is the appointment for your wife or your girlfriend?"

"No, it's for me."

Pause . . . "Well, we only do the sheath, you know."

"Yes, that's what I want."

Pause . . . "and you're limited to ten a month."

"Yes, that's OK"

Pause . . . "and you'll have to sit in the clinic with a lot of women."

By this time I was beginning to feel that I wasn't wanted but for the final statement, "Oh, very well then, you can come down tomorrow at any time."

At the least this reflects a bureaucratic attitude; but more importantly, at a time when few men accept any responsibility for contraception, to actively put men off displays some distinct lack of feminist ideas in the F.P.A.
Yours in solidarity
Richard Peters
Leeds

by Marion Fudger

JOAN ARMATRADING



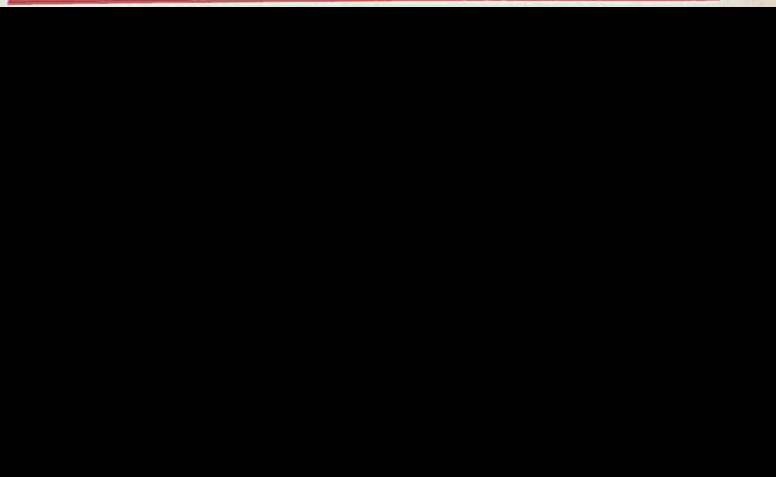
MARION FUDGER

When Joan Armatrading walked onto the vast stage of London's Hammersmith Odeon last month and heard a roar of approval from the capacity crowd, her knees turned to jelly. It was the first time she'd topped the bill in Britain, a turning point in her career. The venue which holds 3,000 is a money spinner for the music industry, not intimate, and acoustically poor. She stood stiffly behind her guitar, looking very alone without the usual frills and trappings of star status performers.

But she needn't have worried, the audience loved her and the critics raved. And that, with a successful album and single means, in music business terms, she's 'made it'.

Because she defies the common stereotypes of women in music, there are difficulties. She shies away from coming on sexy and coy, holding herself at a distance. A cult image like Patti Smith's, or a blatant sexual display like Tina Turner's are more simple to define and perfect. But how can Joan develop her presentation? Perhaps she will become more cool, laid back, arrogant, so her nerves don't show so much.

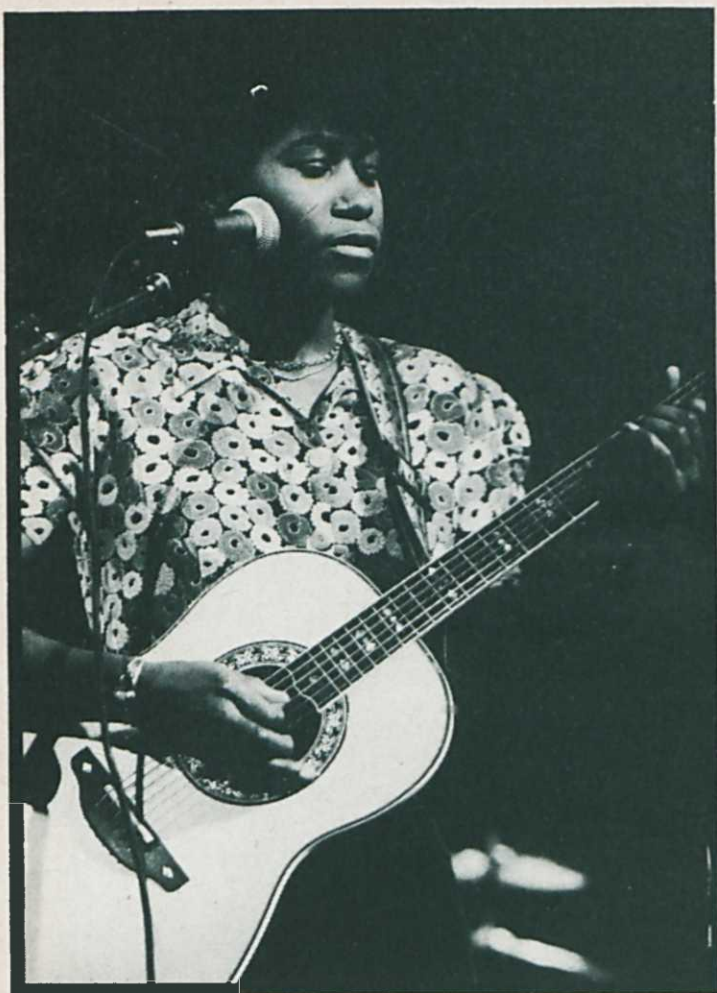
'I spent the first half of that gig not really knowing what was going on. Everybody said how calm I was when I came out onto the stage — I wasn't, I was petrified. You've got to start somewhere and it's never at the top. It's never with supreme confidence. You're bound to be nervous and unable to communicate. I have never, ever been that nervous. I didn't relax once, throughout the whole gig.'



She is caught in a crossfire of demands between those who identify with her and those who promote her. The publicity which built up to the Hammersmith Odeon was extensive — posters, window displays in record shops, advertisements in the press and on radio and a television appearance. She is not promoted on straight sex appeal, it's far more subtle. She's sold like a box of Black Magic — richly sensual, exotic, mysterious — they tell you straight — she is very good — 'but will you listen?' Challenging. Clever.

She attracts a cross cultural audience, people normally catered for by very different markets. She has a strong following amongst feminists, gay and black people. All want her to make statements in favour of their politics. 'I don't mind who identifies with me. I don't feel I should have to get up and say I'm black, I'm gay, I'm straight, I'm a women's libber or I'm sleeping with eighteen ducks a week or whatever. Leave that sort of intellectual business to people who are intellectuals — or who feel they are. I don't feel I'm an intellectual and that I can tell people what to do, go into politics and all that business, I don't feel I'm capable of making people do anything. If they feel like that through the lyrics of the song, that's fine, because the songs are for people to get involved with. But for me to actually preach . . . I don't think that's right.'

'Some people in this business are capable of doing it because



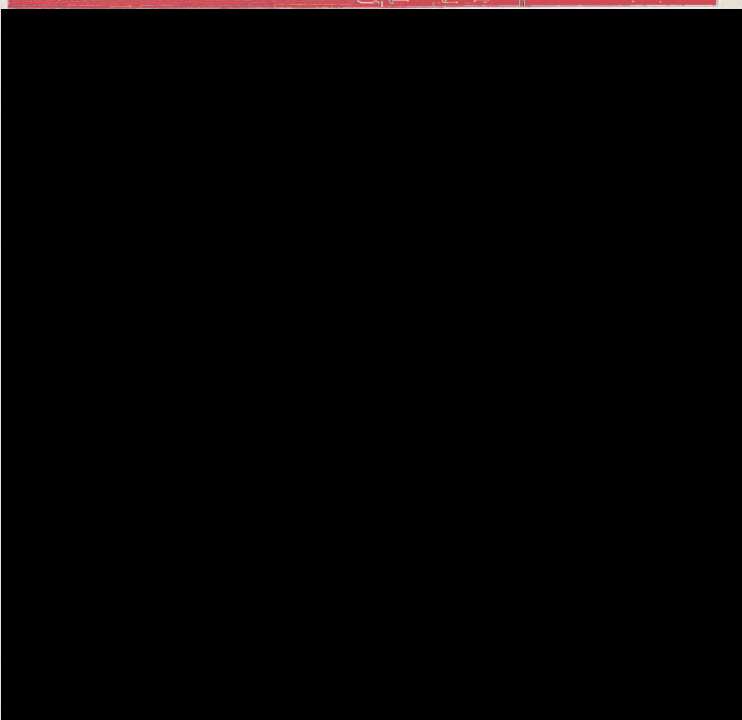
they've had a university training — that doesn't mean to say that because you've been to university you obviously know it all, but they do know a bit what they're talking about. Also naturally intelligent people. Well, I don't feel either. I'm just ordinary.

'I have got very important opinions on *Sparky*. Every week go out and buy the *Judy*, the *Mandy*, the *Sparky*, the *Beano*, the *hoopee*, *Bunty*, *Wizard and Chips*, and *Sparky* is the best. And that's the truth. That's it. That's my intellect. I read comics.'

writer/musicians as she is), it's easy to see why we are drawn to her.

But she doesn't wonder who's listening to her music or why they like her songs. She sees herself only in terms of her own integrity and professionalism. An individual striving for the most perfect presentation of her material. For each of her three albums, she has tried different musicians and hasn't yet wanted to form a permanent group. She's worked with women occasionally — with Pam Nestor on lyrics, with Jacki Whitren for a *Spare Rib* benefit — but wouldn't make a point of looking for women. 'I've got the band I like. It's no good me having an all women band and then not being satisfied with it. I wouldn't have another bass player because he's the best mate of my brother. You pick the people you play with because you enjoy working with them and they are good musicians — full stop.'

She doesn't socialise with her musicians and has comparatively few friends in the music business. Her manager, Mike Stone, is an exception; he's supported her from the beginning, and though she's very cautious with people, she trusts him and considers he does a good job. Most of her spare time is spent on writing new songs or re-arranging old ones — she's quickly bored by her own material.



She is defensive on the subject of her publicity and doesn't like to think about it too much. 'The only thing I'm worried about is getting better, writing better songs and playing better.' That is her formula for succeeding and though it might sound naive, it has worked. Some people commercialise their music to trash in order to get into the charts and onto the radio; the quality of her songs stands out in comparison.

'Publicity obviously helps, if you didn't publicise an album, people wouldn't know it was there, and nothing would happen. But I hope these people haven't bought it just on publicity. I hope they've bought it because they think it's good. They [the record company] didn't put this much into *Back To The Night* which means to me they obviously thought this album was worth it, and the last one wasn't. I don't know if I'm happy with everything they've said in the publicity but I'm pleased I can at least walk down the street and not be embarrassed.'

Is she pleased with her success? 'I want people to know what I'm doing, that's why I'm doing it, isn't it? I've never said I don't want to be recognised as writing a song or playing the guitar. I'm a bit on the defensive because everybody keeps saying "Oh, you're a star". Well, my name's more known — or at least more people can pronounce it, but I don't feel I'm at the top of anything yet. I still feel as if I've got a long way to go, it's not as if I'm going to sit back and be comfortable.'

So what do we identify with? She's got a powerful and beautiful voice, not put-on feminine or tinkly like a lot of women. She doesn't sing sexist songs though she's not explicitly feminist. Her lyrics are easy to identify with. She looks strong, her guitar playing is exceptional, she doesn't dress up and play up to men. It doesn't sound much perhaps, but when you compare her to her British contemporaries — Kiki Dee, Linda Lewis, Elkie Brooks, Carol Grimes (none of whom are song-

She came over from the West Indies when she was eight, to join her large family in Birmingham. They had moved here several years earlier. She was miserable and lonely and her family very poor. She left school and started work as a comptometer operator at sixteen to help out. About this time she began teaching herself to play the guitar; her hard life added to her determination to get on and get out. Eventually she did move away to London to concentrate solely on her music, but her family's poverty is still a problem for her.

Joan feels her audience finds her slightly strange, especially in America. 'They think I'm a bit odd, for one thing I'm not American and for another I'm black. Over there if you are black, you sing soul or reggae — even more so than here. They see me with a guitar, only they don't think I'm *really* going to play it. And of course they don't expect me to talk like this [with a West Indian/Birmingham accent], or my songs to be like that, so quite often, if they don't know me, it's more of a struggle than here, it's just too alien. If I was white in that instance, it would be easier because white and English is alright, it's normal, but black and English — that's a bit weird. Black guys say "Why do you talk like that?" And I had a note once, "Could I come over to this table and talk because they'd never heard an English black person before."'

They can't make Joan out: 'I play the guitar competently, my songs aren't soul and easily hummable . . . But in the places where they like me, then they really do, they just accept it.

'I think with this album, and as of the Hammersmith gig, there has been a lot of change — people knowing who I am — even in America. Up till now I've always done support gigs — I still do in America, and people go to see the headliner not me, and they wonder 'Who's she? What's that?' "

The recognition Joan has received for *Joan Armatrading*, her recent album, might seem like an overnight success story to a lot of people. In fact many think it's her first album. But it's been four years since the release of her first LP *Whatever's For Us*. In those days she hadn't much confidence in her ability to write words for her songs, so she collaborated with her friend Pam Nestor. They wrote about pressures in families, life falling short of expectations and problems in relationships. The arrangements went from the full use of strings or brass to Joan simply accompanying herself on guitar or piano. Though the record received a few good reviews, it didn't sell particularly well. Joan reckons poor distribution was partly to blame.

It was three years, a lot of problems, and a contract with another record company (A&M) before her next release, *Back To The Night*. This time only two songs were co-written with Pam Nestor, the rest she wrote herself. The overall feel of her music had changed, towards a stronger, more basic and percussive sound. Many more people started to take notice but Joan was depressed while making the album and wasn't happy with the finished product. She just wanted to get on with the next one.

She enjoyed making *Joan Armatrading* and believes it's her best so far. The album has been put together with great care; the top class producer and session musicians she has used show her unique style at its best. Her phrasing, compelling use of dynamics — changes of volume and feel — and time signatures are made to appear deceptively simple. Her voice is richer and more flexible than ever and her lyrics, emotive and strong.

Up to last year she had performed relatively little. She's always been a reluctant performer, especially in the early days when she played alone. But she has grown to enjoy it more with the support of a band and has done more gigs in the past eighteen months than in all the previous three years put together.

Of course the music press has had a sudden change of heart; they can find plenty of space for her now. 'There have been a couple of people who've liked me from the start, a guy called Roger Scott who interviewed me, Penny Valentine, you . . . but there were a lot of people who just thought I was a load of rubbish. That's alright, they're entitled to their opinion. I'm pleased so many people have changed their minds but annoyed sometimes too. I suppose it won't be long before they're all saying, "Oh she's a load of rubbish anyway, what did I ever see in her?"'

In her music press interviews, it's quite funny to see Joan's blunt refusal to cooperate with their prying attempts to dig down and find out the juicy bits. *New Musical Express* called her 'Ms Armourplating', but others went beyond a joke in their snide attempts to make good copy. For instance, *Melody Maker*: 'Does she love women more than men? . . . Why is she so insecure, then, so self protective? Has it anything to do with something which happened very early on in her life? . . . She wasn't loved by her father?'

Little wonder Joan Armatrading feels strongly: 'I wish people would just listen to the songs and leave me alone.' □

Middlesex Polytechnic

Active Trade Unionist?

If you are, or want to be, then you'll be thinking about ways of increasing your usefulness in the Trade Union Movement.

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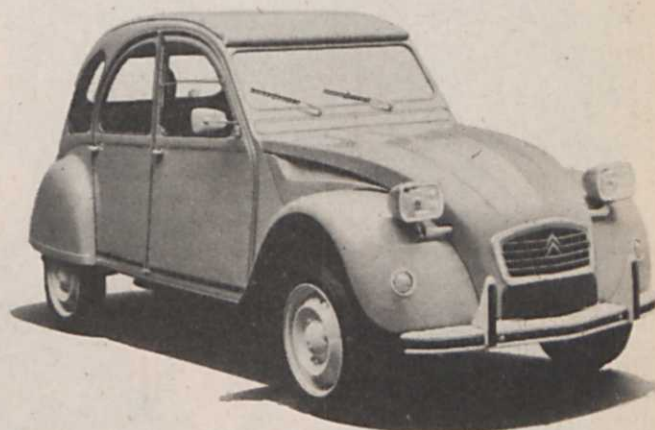
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CITROËN



Playgroup Against Prejudice

Chapeltown has had a bad reputation in Leeds. It is the city's main black community, where housing is bad, schools inadequate, and unemployment high. A steady rate of police harassment keeps frustrations on the boil — last year's Bonfire Night erupted into an incident where kids threw stones at police cars. In this setting Chapeltown Community Playgroup aims to cater for some 60 pre-school children, of West Indian, Asian and white parents. Penny, who works at the playgroup, and Jill, who has observed it for some time, talked with the staff.

the staff

We are — Angela, West Indian, a school leaver; Andy, a single man, white; Balgindra Ranu, the Supervisor, who is Asian and a single parent with two children at school; Penny, a single parent whose daughter attends the playgroup; Susan, married with two school age children. All of us except Susan are on Social Security and get paid for our playgroup work the maximum legal earnings — £4 for people with kids and £2 for childless people. We each work between twelve and twenty hours a week. As well as the regular staff we have some voluntary workers one morning or so a week.

the children

We have 30–35 kids every morning, and between 20 and 30 in the afternoons, three afternoons at the moment. Roughly a third of the kids are white, a third Asian and a third West Indian. Children pay 15p a session, and some of the older ones stay for the whole day. Our long opening hours, the large number of kids and the fact that workers are paid a little makes us an untypical playgroup.

different attitudes

Angela: "The kids are treated all right. I think they all get a fair share. I think they should be learning to read, write, things like that. But they're only young, they've got plenty of time. Most of them call me teacher, but I prefer them to call me Angela, 'cos teacher's a bit . . . high."

Ms. Ranu: "I think they treat me as another parent, they call me mummy, the Asian children call me auntie."

Andy: "A couple of the Asian kids stopped coming because they couldn't deal with the group situation. They cried contin-

ually. This is pretty lousy for the playgroup — pretty lousy for the kid. We've had some successes; they've all been successes to an extent. These two kids, after a while they got better, then they left."

Nearly all Asian children cry for the first two weeks at least. Some Asian kids are taken back to their parents' country of birth to visit; this is very disruptive for us and for them.

Andy: "From what I see black people bring up their kids much stricter. There's an enormous warmth between them all, brothers, sisters, friends, relatives, underneath. On the surface they're stricter and more openly harsh, aggressive, in dealing with each other and their kids. White people aren't. I think this is one of the difficulties at the playgroup, because it's mainly white staff, or has been plus one Asian. And the black kids get away with much more with us than with their parents."

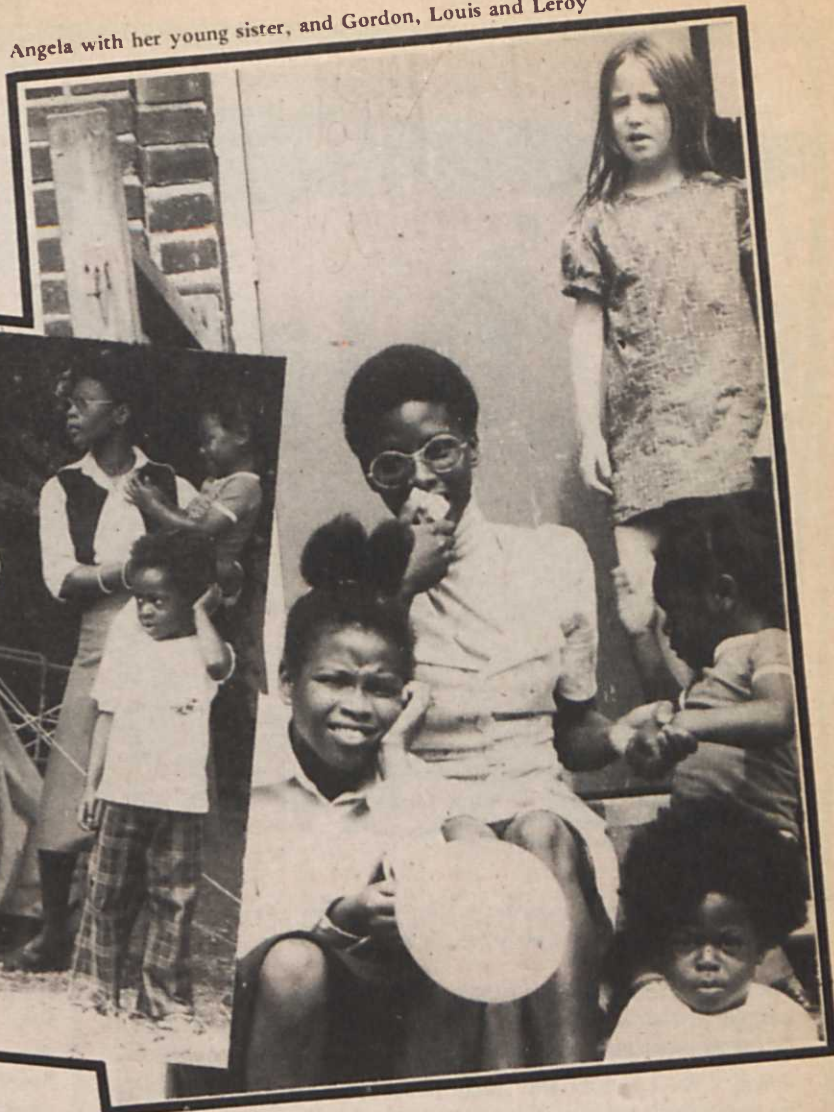
Angela: "They say that West Indians aren't brought up good enough and that they're a bad influence on white children. But I think the little kids at nursery get on all right, as they don't know much about prejudice."

Susan: "I don't know anything about Asian and West Indian different culture and religions and things. I can't do anything about it because I don't know anything about it — not unless I'm told, by one of the parents or Mrs. Ranu."

Ms. Ranu: "I think the children are not learning properly, because we don't have enough staff to give them proper attention, and we haven't got proper books yet, to build their language. I think we need more staff than other playgroups, because there are more coloured children."

Andy: "I don't think the playgroup is structured enough — there's not enough education and there's not enough reading, counting, description, and not enough group activity. Everything's still very chaotic with various racial groups, especially the Asians, as they start off with a language barrier — more structured activity would be good for them."

Angela with her young sister, and Gordon, Louis and Leroy



In the back garden

boys & girls

We asked staff about sexism. Should boys and girls be treated differently?

Susan: "A lot of the girls come in, the older ones, they've got their own ways from home — their mothers aren't liberated, are they? They think that the girls should be in the kitchen and the boys in the garage. I don't deliberately go out of my way to alter that. You can't suddenly say to a girl 'you're wrong to be in the kitchen,' and give a dishcloth to the lads. You couldn't do it fast anyway. Because the parents are at home and they're doing it all differently. I think we should encourage quiet girls to come out of themselves but not to be rough. Not boys either, we don't want them to be rough, even though they've got to stick up for themselves."

Penny: "I used to think you'd have to be conscious of sexism all the time and make sure that the girls were quite tough and the boys weren't too domineering. And some of the West Indian boys are pretty heavy — but some of the girls are pretty heavy as well, and the race thing is more predominant in our playgroup than the sex difference."

Like some of the Asian kids get pushed about a bit by the black kids. And white kids either fit in with the black kids — who really are the dominant force — or some can't stand it and their parents take them away. If we had more staff we could deal with this better."

Angela: "Boys and girls should be treated just the same — I think they should play along as they like."

who runs the playgroup?

Mainly it's run by the staff, but there's a management committee which takes care of fund-raising and accounting,

and buys new equipment. It was hoped that parents would take part in committee activities, but few of them do. Most of the committee members are white and middle class. Staff can now attend committee meetings, but they had to take action to secure their right to do so.

Susan: "The committee's not bad, but I think it should involve the staff a bit more. They're going over our heads all the time. It's been open to staff since two of us gatecrashed one of their meetings. It was awful, you could have sliced it with a knife when we walked in. They didn't want us to be there. Mrs. Ranu could go but we reckoned staff should go too. Everyone sat looking at everyone else and from then on they said we'll have to open it for staff. It was worth it."

Ms. Ranu: "Once at a committee meeting it was said that people don't understand what I say. That's ridiculous! If I'm not capable, why keep me on all this time?"

The staff have done quite a lot of fund-raising along with the committee. Recently some of us made an application to the Manpower Commission for money through the Job Creation Scheme. If this comes through, all the staff will get decent wages and the playgroup will be open school hours — all the staff will work full-time. In the past an application was made for an Urban Aid grant, but this was refused. Ms. Ranu has worked as supervisor for over three years now and she has never been paid properly.

Susan: "I don't think the committee has done enough to get wages, I think it all stems back to Mrs. Runciman [Leeds Social Services organiser for playgroups] saying at that committee meeting that staff shouldn't be paid. She thinks that one person should get a decent wage and the rest should be voluntary."

Penny: "I'd like to think that we shouldn't need to have any more raffles and jumble sales and all those laborious ways of earning money. I mean, teachers don't have to run around like that." ►

Playgroup children with brothers and sisters



Ms. Ranu on a coach outing for the summer playscheme



it's a white country

We asked staff members if they thought Asian and West Indian people had an equal say at meetings, and why parents didn't get more involved.

Susan: "West Indian and Asian people are given the opportunity to speak, but most of them don't say much at all. I think a lot of them think that there's no point, because the staff are mainly white, and it's a white country and all that. Mrs. Ranu feels that because she's Asian, she isn't taken much notice of. It's never brought upon staff or committee meetings, Mrs. Ranu just brought it up privately with me. It's nothing to do with what colour she is as far as I'm concerned. I think it would be better if the parents were given more assurance that they'd be listened to when they speak."

Angela: "Parents should be involved but not too much. I don't mind them coming in with the kids — but not when they stick with them. I think the kids should mix with other kids."

Andy: "The parents take very little part in the playgroup, apart from supporting coffee mornings and coming on outings. I think it's because they're not encouraged. Quietly, not aggressively, quietly it is structured. There's a committee, they're really very quiet and just look after finance; there is a supervisor, there are the staff and there are the parents. And there's very little contact between them all. I think this is a bad thing. It doesn't encourage growth of the playgroup. It doesn't encourage community support of it. It doesn't encourage a strategy for better funding."

Penny: "I've always thought we should have a campaign with the parents to get money off the council. But that's a lot of work. At the moment we're trying to do it bureaucratically, with the Job Creation Scheme. That has taken a lot of time. If nothing comes of it we'll have to try something else. We could be filling in Urban Aid forms for ever. Sometimes I think these schemes are designed to waste our time, so that we haven't got the time to organise campaigns that might be more effective."

low status with unions?

In other parts of the country playgroup workers and nursery nurses have joined unions in order to improve their pay and

conditions (see *Spare Rib* 49). What did the staff think of such a move? Two are already in NUPE and the others are quite keen to join, mainly because union membership would provide some accident insurance. But there were doubts about the way they would relate to the union.

Penny: "I'm in NUPE — both me and Andy joined, but we've heard nothing from them at all. I've never been to a union meeting before and I find the thought intimidating. I'm frightened that my status will be frowned upon — I'm just a female playgroup worker."

Susan: "I don't know much about NUPE. If we get a grant from Job Creation, and we have a union and we say 'We want more money', then what will happen if we say we're going on a work to rule? In a job like ours it just doesn't work."

The Pre-School Playgroups Association, the only national organisation for playgroup workers, does not support us in wanting to be paid for what we do. As we said before, we are not a typical playgroup; a lot of playgroups exist in middle class areas where women can afford to work for nothing. But in Chapeltown most women do work outside the house and need proper wages to live. We think it's a good thing to have a man working with us — but he and most other men won't work for very long without a proper wage.

Susan: "To the Government playgroups are practically at the bottom of the list of necessities. As far as they're concerned, children aren't born until they go to school. They just don't want to acknowledge them."

The other strand which runs through everything we do with the playgroup kids and parents is the problem of racism. Living and working in a mixed community means that we all have to struggle for equal status and power. Already there are too many white-dominated organisations in Chapeltown — we're determined not to be one of them.□

stop press

The Manpower Services Commission did grant funds to provide wages of over £2,000 a year for a supervisor, two assistant play-leaders and a part-time book keeper. The playgroup also employs a 17-year-old West Indian school leaver, who is paid from money gathered from session fees. So the playgroup now opens all afternoon, as well as mornings, and the staff feel a lot more enthusiastic!

LEEDS

WOMEN'S REFUGE

Leeds Women's Aid has been running a refuge for 'battered' women and their children since October 1974, used by 350 women and 1,050 children so far. We receive no grants but shortly will be having one wage from Social Services.

We were one of the founding members of the National Women's Aid Federation and try to run the refuge according to its aims and principles.

Our support group is small so we have very few problems with disagreements on tactics, etc., but have to work harder. Right now we're working on: 1) trying to help new members to the group to settle in so that they don't feel outsiders; 2) to encourage the women in the refuge to participate in its running more and to join the support group when they leave the refuge; 3) to learn how to cope with the occasional woman in the refuge who has so many other problems as well as being 'battered' that she is beyond our ability to help her; 4) to tackle the problems involved with having paid workers and 5) how to cope with a Committee which includes members from Statutory Agencies. If you'd like to help, or need help, please ring us at 788246. Donations welcomed!



WIRES, 30 Blenheim Terrace,
Leeds 2. Tel. 0532-35561.

WIRES (Women's Information, Referral & Enquiry Service), set up by the 1975 national women's conference, has 2 aims. One, to produce a twice-monthly newsletter through which women's groups and individuals communicate news and views. Two, to be a central feminist information point, so that questions from 'where's my nearest group?' through equal pay to 'should I have a copper coil?' are answered and the enquirer referred further if necessary.

WIRES is in Leeds for its first two years. We are on Newsletter 21 and many groups all over the country use WIRES for inter-movement nationwide communication. But we are far from covering all Britain and need to reach many more women, especially women outside the women's liberation movement. If requesting info., a s.a.e. helps. Money is always tight, so all donations welcome.

WOMEN'S CENTRE

The Leeds Women's Centre is at 42 Leicester Grove, off Blackman Lane. It opened recently and we want more women to become involved.

This is our current meetings schedule:

Monday 2pm: Information Group, all women and children welcome.

Monday 8pm: Women's Rights Group campaigning around the 5th Demand (Legal & Financial Independence)

Tuesday 8pm: Women's Health Group, we teach ourselves practical skills like self-exam with a speculum, and are also campaigning for better health facilities in the area. We've recently published a pregnancy handbook and the 'Women's Health Handbook - A Self-Help Guide'.

Every 2nd Tuesday 8pm: Lesbian Group, so far we've mostly had social gatherings but are also planning consciousness raising and discussion groups. Next meeting 30 November. More women welcome.

2nd Tuesday of every month: Discussion Group for new members

Wednesday 7.30-8.30pm: Yoga

Friday 8pm: Women's Centre Meeting

WOMEN'S CENTRE FOR HARROGATE

In a terrace basement near the Further Education College, Harrogate Women's Liberation group has found a new home. The centre will provide a place for the group to organise their consciousness raising meetings and other activities, as well as a focus for advice on the social services, nurseries and welfare rights.

The group invite new women to come and bring their own special interests and concerns, as there is time and space for many different projects to flower in the centre. The first event will be a party for the children from the local Women's Aid centre. Harrogate Women's Centre, 7 Park View. Tel. contact Harrogate 887374

WOMEN'S FESTIVAL

Every October hordes of new people stream into the University, so this year we decided to hold a festival to celebrate the women's movement and introduce the Women's Action Group to new sisters.

A social and a question-and-answer session on women's liberation helped to break the ice and get new women talking together. During the three days of the festival local women exhibited their paintings, sculpture and photography, and were available to discuss their work. Some of the films we showed were Mai Zetterling's *The Girls* - one of the first feminist films of the 60s - experimental films by women, and documentaries on women's position in society.

Bea Campbell and Jean Gardiner used a political dialogue between themselves as a starting point in a discussion of women and socialism. Two of the women strikers from Trico came up too, and vividly described their marathon fight for equal pay. Lee Comer talked on the family and women's sexuality.

And there was theatre - *Pirate Jenny* performed sketches on how children are crammed into stiff, ill-fitting sex-roles; SWAT, a Bradford group, chose prostitution for their theme in 'Pros and Cons'.

What started as a university group project snowballed quickly into a Leeds-wide women's event, an inspiration to all of us.

BREAD AND ROSES

Bread and Roses is a paper produced by a women's collective in Leeds. It is for all women who read it and it is written by any woman who has anything to say. There have been five issues so far covering such subjects as Women's Aid, Astrology, Rape, Lesbianism and Women at Work. It is given away because we feel that women's ideas are for sharing and not for selling. Copies go all over the country to individuals and groups. (We survive on donations so they are always welcome!)

Our only common ground is that we are all feminists of one sort or another and, in fact, 'Feminism - What does it mean?' is the theme of the next issue. So please send us your thoughts, stories, poems, pictures on this or any other subject. If you would like to join the collective, get in touch with:

Bread and Roses Collective, 4 Ridge Mount, Cliff Road, Leeds 6.

LEEDS SHORTLIST

GROUPS & ACTIVITIES

- ★ University Women's Action Group, c/o Univ. Union
- ★ Poly Women's Group, c/o Linda Linley, Students Union, Leeds Polytechnic, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2
- ★ Big Flame Women's Group, 457177
- ★ Co-counselling group, contact Marion 670289
- ★ Women Writers Group, c/o The Women's Centre
- ★ Women's Discos at The Grove Inn (behind BR station) last Wed. of each month 8-11pm. 25p at door.

FEMINIST LITERATURE

- ★ Distribution Service of Publishers of Feminist Literature

Feminist Books, the collective which published 'Wedlocked Women' and 'The Conditions of Illusion', is putting its energy

into distributing 28 feminist pamphlets here and in North America, New Zealand and Australia.

- ★ The Corner Book Shop, 162 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2 (opp. university). Books, magazines, posters, badges...

USEFUL CONTACTS

- ★ Gay Switchboard, 39071. Staffed by a woman Thursday evenings
- ★ Pregnancy testing and advice, BPAS, 443861
- ★ Harehill Housing Aid, 629365
- ★ CAB, 457679
- ★ Free legal advice, Chapel-town CAB Wed. evenings 7-9pm

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THEN COLCHESTER

NUCLEAR WAR

My problem is relatively easy to describe, but diabolically difficult to solve. I suspect that there is no simple 'solution', but a continuous need for patience and inventive adjustment. I know my position is in no way unique; there are other women trapped in variations of my particular dilemma.

I'm a divorced woman in my early thirties with a son of ten. For the past four years, I have been living with a man, and for the past four years my son has been jealous and hostile of the time and attention I give to my lover, who in turn is resentful and hostile because of the attention I give to my son. I am continually pulled by conflicting loyalties, sandwiched as I am between the two of them. Of course there is a solution which can be expressed as simply as the problem: my lover must grow to accept (if not love) my son, and the boy must respond likewise. It's a situation which needs a magic wand because nothing else — neither logic, nor common sense, nor even patience — seems likely to bring it about in anything like the near future.

An Interloper

The fact that Morgan and I aren't married is to some extent relevant. My marriage to Don's father broke up when Don was far too young to remember our nuclear family. But he can remember a time when there was just the two of us, the time Before Morgan; and so it must seem logical to him that there could be a time After Morgan when he will no longer have

In response to our request for people to write about their attempts to understand and change personal relationships, *Tracy* describes the warfare in her home and *Morgan* provides his side of the story. Can their situation be dismissed as just another example of the stresses and strains of "step-family" life? Or are they describing feelings that lie beneath the surface of every conventional family as men and children try to get all they are led to expect from a woman.

to compete for my attention with an interloper. It is this that he seems to be trying to accomplish by making life so uncomfortable for the three of us that either Morgan will leave, or I'll ask him to go.

One of the 'advantages' of the nuclear family is that any hostility a child may show towards either of its

parents is regarded, nowadays, as 'normal'. It is expected, if not accepted, that a child will feel from time to time, aggressive and hostile towards one or both of its parents. The child is, however, aware that its parents have been there all its life, and so can safely assume that no amount of hostility will drive either parent away.

It is accepted, too, that the child of a nuclear family has no control over whether its parents continue to live together or decide to separate. The parents may or may not take the child's existence into account when making such a decision, but the child itself plays no part in the decision-making process.

We are outside these traditional roles, and Don sees himself as able to manipulate future events by his attitudes and actions towards Morgan and myself. From his point of view, this is entirely understandable: Morgan and I have shown that there is an element of choice in our continuing to live together. If I can choose to have Morgan stay or go, why can't Don? We allow him other rights of choice — his friends, out of school activities, his tastes in food. I can well appreciate his feeling that he should have some say about the person I live with since, of necessity, Don lives with him too.

Unprepared for Fatherhood

I do not believe that things would improve if I married Morgan and he took on the role of 'stepfather'. If anything, Don's hostility would increase; he has a sufficiently secure relationship with his own father (my ex-husband) not to need a substitute. In any case the role of 'father' is not one that Morgan wishes, or is able, to assume.

It occurs to me that despite the stereotype of the Wicked Stepmother, a woman entering the unit of Father and Child would make more effort, and be better equipped to facilitate a harmonious living situation. In our society, women are socialised into the role of mother from an early age, whereas men are not so well prepared to be fathers, and are probably less willing and find it more difficult to take on the role, let alone the role of surrogate father. It is certainly made even more difficult when the child is jealous and hostile, and his age makes him less flexible than a very young child.

At the root of the problem is the fact that Don, aged ten, doesn't appreciate that I am a person with needs and a life beyond that of being his mother. Nor does he realise that eventually he will live his own life



independent of me. He suspects, correctly, that there are ways in which Morgan is more important to me than he could ever be. Hopefully Don also knows that the converse is true. I am balanced between, and often torn apart by, these conflicting bonds.

At the moment, we all live in a state of precarious truce, broken by flare-ups that gain no ground for either of them and always inflict damage on me. But far worse than the pitched battles is the sniping and bickering which does greater long-term damage. A typical example. All three of us are sitting in the living-room: Morgan leaves his chair to fetch something, Don immediately moves into the chair that Morgan occupied, in order to provoke him and indirectly me. Incidents like this, trivial in themselves, keep one nervewracked, constantly on the look-out for the next petty confrontation.

Heavy Obligations

Morgan and Don would probably get on if I didn't exist, or if I weren't Don's mother or Morgan's lover. Morgan's objections aren't that Don is 'another man's child' and therefore unacceptable; he objects to the obligations that I have towards Don, obligations that have moral precedence over those I have chosen to have towards Morgan. The boy is a heavy emotional and financial burden that Morgan had no part in making and which are only accidentally any of his concern. And the demands on Morgan and I are heavier than on any young couple starting out, since we never had any time alone as a couple; there was always Don and the assumption that if Morgan wanted me, he'd have to have Don too. So I fully understand when Morgan feels constrained by the domestic situation he has 'inherited' not created, just as I appreciate Don's resentment at this

intruder into our lives.

Of course, Morgan knows that if it ever came to the reality of choice, I'd have no choice. Because of the complex obligations of motherhood, which I have been brought up to accept unquestioned (and now having questioned, still accept), I would have to choose Don, even though the decision would make me unhappy. If Morgan ever presented a 'me-or-him' ultimatum, he knows, as I know, that he is the one who would have to be expendable and that I would never desert Don. Until my son is old enough to leave me, I cannot leave him. And however much I long for freedom, for the more spontaneous, less restricted life that could be mine if Don didn't exist, I am trapped now in motherhood and can't, without destruction and guilt, escape.

Losing Myself

From society's point of view, I have my priorities right. I 'sensibly' realise that motherhood is not a state from which I can escape by wishing things were different. I am Don's mother first and only after that am I Morgan's lover. I do see myself as a person in my own right. But it's difficult to maintain this 'independence' and yet relate as 'mother' and 'lover' on a continually vital and real level. Lapsing into the stereotype of these relationships is often easier — and I become resentful when I feel that I have lost the 'me' who is a person in my own right. My lack of consistency contributes to the situation in which we are

all enmeshed. So I can't pretend that I am 'blameless' when Morgan or Don disturbs the peace.

I suppose, in living with Morgan, I am demonstrating to Don that I am more than Don's Mother; I am a three dimensional person with needs and rights of my own. But Don cannot yet see clearly the parts of me which exist outside those areas in which I relate to him. And Morgan finds it hard to accept the needs and responsibilities I have in my relationship with my son, if only because they consume time and attention that I might otherwise give to him.

Unrealistic Solution

It's only a matter of time before Don will leave home (even if only emotionally) to build a life for himself which must of necessity exclude me, or place me only on the outer fringes. If he is to become a whole human being, he must let me go. But it seems a heavy thing for me to be demanding that for an indefinite period (probably for years) Morgan should tolerate Don's hostility and aggression, manipulation and cunning, acceptance and rejection, for the sake of our relationship.

I attempted a solution that failed for us but might work for others. I thought that if I pointed out what was happening to us and if we were open about it, we would create an atmosphere of honesty, see ourselves in perspective and perhaps modify our treatment of each other.

This failed perhaps because it was simply unrealistic — neither Morgan nor Don trusts the other sufficiently to lay down arms and render himself vulnerable to acts of aggression from the other.

At my most depressed, after some trivial conflict of will between Morgan and Don, or Don and myself, has flared into a blazing eruption of discontent and anger, there seems to be no way of making our situation constructive. When I'm optimistic I feel that even if none of us has what we want, we may well be creating, in lurches and by accident, between the crises and sometimes despite them, something which, if not a solution, is a living and enduring compromise. Perhaps I'm being unrealistic in hoping for more.

Morgan replies:

I certainly had done no advance preparation for my present situation. I suppose, if I'd been asked four years ago, before I met Tracy, what I ►

NUCLEAR WAR

expected of the future — I'd have said that I hoped to meet a girl with whom I'd like to spend a major part of my life. Whether those daydreams were romantic or practical, whether I was speculating on A Grand Passion or a Comfortable Affection, I must admit that these vague daydreams contained only me and The Girl, whoever she would prove to be.

If I were honest, I think I'd admit that I was unprepared for The Girl to have a son, and that at the beginning I tended to ignore it, rather than attempting to come to terms with it.

Obviously, after four years of aggression and hostility from Don, interspersed with periods of sweetness and light, I'm capable of facing up to the realities of my situation. Which doesn't mean that I'm entirely happy with the way things are — merely that I'm no longer unprepared for my present reality.

I like Don most of the time; I don't love him and probably never will. I haven't, up to now, chosen to become a father, and I'd prefer not to pretend to Don (or to Tracy) that I feel anything remotely paternal towards Don.

There have been moments when I've been callous enough to admit to myself that he is not an enhancer of my life, but a restrictor of it. Not, because of what Don is, but merely because he exists.

I put up with it — after four years, I'm relatively trained in the style of warfare that Don and I intermittently conduct. I think that Tracy has defined successfully the ever-present current of hostility in which the three of us live, but it affects her more than it touches me. Possibly because she is the bone of contention, the apex of our eternal triangle.

Obviously there have been moments when I've wanted to yell at Don, 'Yes, she's your mother; now you take her and I'm off!', but I don't go. My relationship with Tracy is worth more than the discomfort I suffer at the hands of her hostile son.

The boy has grown in subtlety over the years but he has a long way to go before he is a sparring partner that I need to take at all seriously. The way in which our tussles cause Tracy distress is far more upsetting than the actual battle of wills with Don. If I resent him at all, it is because, after all this time, he still can't or won't accept that he is

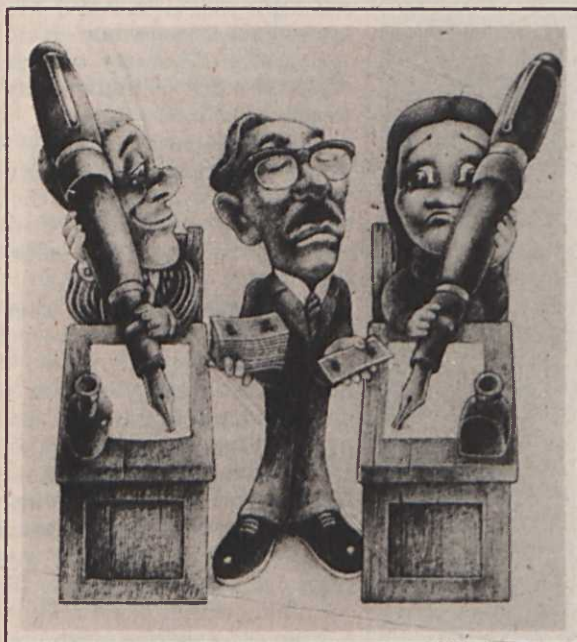
unlikely to win. I'm realist enough to acknowledge that it isn't me personally whom Don is fighting, but The Man in his mother's life. Perhaps some other man would have tried harder, in the initial stages, to get Don to come to terms with what is, and what is likely to continue to be. I've made tactical errors, out of ignorance — this is the first time the woman in my life has had a child, and I've had to learn as we all went along, and therefore there have been times when I've made mistakes — which Don has managed to benefit from.

I'm a more easy-going person than Tracy is; I suspect I take this less to heart than she does, but I'm aware of the issues that confront us, and I don't give up easily.

Life isn't all roses, but then whose life is? Obviously I'd prefer a more harmonious situation, but seeing that it doesn't exist, I see no point in wringing my hands in misery about it. Far better to take things as they come.

I'm as unlikely to leave Tracy because Don doesn't want me here as he is unlikely to stop wishing I wasn't here. We both love Tracy in our different ways, and if this is the basis of our disagreement, it is also the factor which cements us into our present relationship. □

The TASS Guide to What They Say. Number One.



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NEWS

Last month five Moroccan teenagers kidnapped and raped a girl. They dragged her off a street in Earls Court, London, into a flat where they held her for three hours and raped her seven times. She was rescued by a West Indian who heard the noise from a flat above.

The rapists were tried and convicted, despite a defence attempt to prove the victim was a prostitute. Four of them received incredibly light sentences: two were sent to a Borstal and one was sentenced to six months in a detention centre; the youngest, at 13, was acquitted because the law says he is too young to rape — so he was committed to care. The fifth sentence was delayed pending a social report.

Apologising for the leniency of the sentences, Judge Sutcliffe told the boys, "Each of you needs a long period of training under restraint so that you cannot harm others and in which you can discipline yourselves to a way of life and mode of living from a different culture." He explained that the law prevented heavier sentences because of their youth; on leaving the dock the rapists slapped each other on the back, delighted at their good fortune.

The sentences provoked an immediate outcry: "A good dose of the cane would have done these people the world of good . . . there is no doubt that young men are physically mature, particularly if not British, at a very early age," said Nicholas Winterton, Tory MP.

Outrage exploded when it was pointed out that Sutcliffe could have taken advantage of the Children and Young Persons Act of 1933 which allows for much heavier sentences. Another Tory, Michael Brotherton, called the penalties



'Send these Moroccan creatures home!'

RIGHT~EOUS FURY AT RAPE

a disgrace, demanded Sutcliffe's resignation and recommended that "these Moroccan creatures and their parents should be sent home."

The judge apologised again, then sentenced the fifth rapist to three years in gaol. He claimed this 18-year-old was more culpable than his 17½-year-old friend who is serving only six months.

Rally Round "Our" Women
The rape was a ghastly crime and to hear that the boys publicly congratulated each other on the light sentences was appalling. But the squalid hypocrisy of the public reaction was worse in a way; it was completely unrelated to the rape and centred on the race of the offenders.

The implication was that whites don't behave that way

— just as with the recent Brixton 'muggings' case, where Judge Gwyn Morris urged whites to form vigilante groups for defence against West Indians. In both cases the people on trial were non-whites and were dangling hopelessly outside the usual safety nets of good education, housing and employment. The Moroccan boys had been "running wild" in West London and had recently been evicted from their squat. These are conditions likely to breed violence, but there's no proof of the frequent assertions that non-whites commit more violent crime as statistics don't provide a racial breakdown.

Convictions for rape are rare and press interest is usually salacious. This time, because the rapists were Arab, righteous fury characterised the criticism

of the sentences: "Our women are being ravaged." Had her assailants been white, then the defence assertion that the victim was a prostitute would probably have been a mitigating factor; she wanted it, or deserved it.

We are going to see increasing racism in rape cases, and continuing indifference to the hundreds of rapes that women are too ashamed and intimidated to report.

Precious Virgin

It is revolting to watch the Right using our fears and our suffering to further their racist cause. I was enraged when I heard that these rapists had been so lightly dealt with but no more than when I read about the white student rapist bragging outside the court, "I knew I'd get away with it." (See SR 51).

Rape is endemic in sexist society, and in most cases the law conspires with the rapist by viewing rape as a crime against property. Only when there is a clear violation of property rights — when the victim is a virgin or the rapist is black — can the victim be confident in bringing charges. The point was nicely made by a judge when sentencing the rapist of a 15-year-old girl to 25 years: "A clean young woman is a very precious thing."

If we are to put an end to rape we have to organise among ourselves — rape crisis centres, self-defence — and we have to establish in the law, the courts and the press that rape is the violent denial of our humanity. Most women do not prosecute and most rapists know that; if charges are brought they know the court will give them the benefit of the doubt. We need laws which deal with the crime of rape and which penalise according to the gravity of the assault. □

Victoria Green

We have been asked to clarify that the John Margetts mentioned in a rape case report in SR 51 is a 22-year-old art student, tried in Chelmsford.

RACE NEWS

IAN AND JANET SMITH ~ no different from Mick Jagger

'However we feel about the situation in Rhodesia', *Woman's Own* wrote on September 18, we're interested in how Ian and Janet Smith live. When UDI was declared and economic sanctions imposed in 1965, they report, 'Everyone said Rhodesia and Ian Smith were finished. Today it is apparent they are not.' The article appeared ten days before the illegal Smith regime accepted the Kissinger-Callaghan proposals for a transfer to black majority rule within two years.

Not that such a development would embarrass the magazine's editorial staff. "We did it just as a piece — from no political standpoint at all," said Features Editor Iris Burton. After all, the article was one in an 'international series' about 'the couples everyone wants to know more about'.

Wholemeal scones, an elegant silver teapot ('Ian always pours'), a "way of life that's successful with our black Rhodesians as well", no servant problem, naturally, since there are six million blacks and 273,000 whites. Admittedly, a 'slightly unreal, two-tier atmosphere about life in Salisbury'... but some mushy sentiment from Janet about wanting to live "in a free country", where "everybody, black and white, could

really live together without numbers being counted". She also reminded reporter Shelagh Massie somewhat more firmly that Ian "epitomises the whole of Rhodesia. He's really a figurehead of what the Rhodesians are like".

Our readers are bright enough. The left wing response to 'Ian and Janet — Living on a tight-rope' included a brief occupation of the *Woman's Own* office in the new IPC building in Waterloo. A member of the magazine's editorial staff told the South African Solidarity Campaign, who also leafleted workers going into the building, that "although not as intelligent as journalists", readers were bright enough to see the absurdity of the Smiths' life-style.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement in London responded rather differently from the

intelligent journalist. "What is extremely serious," secretary Mike Terry told the *Morning Star*, "is that *Woman's Own* should allow its pages to be used for propaganda on behalf of the white racists. The time and effort spent on securing this interview would have been better spent on examining the life of a black family in Zimbabwe* today." The domestic servants the Smiths boasted about, he continued, "can expect to earn a measly £7 a week, and the position of the bulk of African workers on white farms is even worse."

So did Iris Burton feel the article was propaganda? "Oh, my goodness me, no — quite the reverse. One decides which people in the world are attracting interest. It was just a story. That's how we got it."

But they chose to run it? They didn't just 'get' it — they commissioned it. "As we do with all our features," she said, as though it were a quibble over words. "That story was tackled no differently from tackling a story about Mick Jagger or Elizabeth Taylor."

'I was shocked!'

Woman's Own agreed to run a reply from the SASC and it appeared at the end of October — fast for a magazine which works on a seven week production schedule, or longer if possible. But by being titled 'I was shocked!' and placed alongside 'Garlic lasts... and lasts!', 'Chivalry rides again' and 'Load of love', its point was undermined. And why was the name and address of the woman's organisation left off? Iris Burton didn't know.

That same week the Geneva talks on Rhodesia's transition to independence were assembling. President Agostino Neto of Angola has said that the initiative for liberating the people of Africa can never come from the US. African delegates at Geneva stress that as colonial power, Britain should assume full responsibility for negotiating Zimbabwe's independence. Kissinger's personal guarantee that the sanctions would be lifted was one of Smith's conditions for acceptance of the proposals, which aim to create an interim executive government with white ministers of defence and law and order. Zimbabwe's three main African

groups insist that control over the country's armed forces and police be handed over to the black majority during the transfer of power.

None of this, of course, is going to be expressed in magazines like *Woman's Own*. The intro to 'Ian and Janet' made it quite clear: 'We decided to find out how these two people, precariously balanced between the conflicting interests of world politics, manage to live. What is their home life like? Are the pressures straining their relationship?'

The conventions of a woman's own sphere are reinforced; yet made intangible when Iris Burton asserts impartiality. "We hope a story will be objective enough not to rub people up the wrong way," she said.

Not just a pasty rag

Even so the International Socialists' monthly *Women's Voice*, reporting the SASC occupation, was wrong to dismiss *Woman's Own* as "that pasty rag". For it's not all

I was shocked!

As a strong opponent of apartheid and the illegal Rhodesian regime, I was shocked to see the good publicity your magazine gave to Ian Smith and his wife (September 18). The luxury displayed in your photos and article is only for the privileged white elite at the expense of the black majority. The average black wage is about £5 a week—10 per cent of the average white wage. The racist dictatorship in Southern Africa keeps the African people in poverty and misery while the white population live in extreme luxury. This is why I am a member of an organisation which actively supports those fighting for freedom in Africa. — Sue Cockerill (address supplied).

delicious knitting any more. Within the constraints of the neat commodity, the magazine is changing.

It's not only that it's responding to the actual changes in women's situation with articles on the anti-discrimination legislation or the Government's sell-out on child benefits. There's a strong sense that women count, must start thinking of themselves as real people with real needs. "I enjoy my work," says Elizabeth Laverick of the Institute of Electrical Engineers in an article on looks and the working woman, "and can't emphasise how important it is to me that women are becoming recognised in engineering."

Throughout the magazine



Black schoolchildren and others give the clenched fist salute, shouting 'Amandla' (power), as Langa and Guguletu, Cape Town's African 'townships' demonstrate in solidarity with Soweto students. Later that morning the police fired at them, killing sixteen.

The Black Power sign is "a salute to Nelson Mandela, our leader who is on Robben Island [prison] because of his love for us" a schoolboy told the Cillie Commission of inquiry, which was investigating the country-wide riots, in October.

"White schoolkids are simply not in the same league; they've been brainwashed into patriotism" an eighteen year old black girl said, "they are preparing for the exams that most of their black contemporaries will be boycotting in solidarity with schoolkids who were shot by the police or were arrested." □

SONG TO VORSTER
(to the tune of Frere Jacques)

BJ VORSTER
BJ VORSTER
SLAAP JY NOG
SLAAP JY NOG
HOOR SKREE DIE KINDERS
HOOR SKREE DIE KINDERS
BLACK POWER
BLACK POWER

(BJ Vorster, are you still sleeping,
listen to the kids shouting:
Black Power...)

there's more of the real content of women's lives. The "young NHS doctor" who now writes Doctor's Diary is "married to a physiotherapist and they have three children"; Dr Wimpole has "retired" — or is it private practice that's on the retreat? The young NHS doctor's first column dealt with the over-prescribing of tranquillisers.

Readers are increasingly encouraged to find their identity in their own way; *Woman's Own* wants to help them build self-esteem and reduce stress, recommending "regular and satisfactory sex" and "the new disciplines" of yoga and transcendental meditation. And though letters from lesbians rarely appear on Mary Grant's problem page, her page for men gives Gay Switchboard as a contact number for homosexuals.

The change in women's consciousness that the magazine advocates is primarily personal and sexual. Within a feminist context this would be part of a highly political change. Yet by then confining itself to the home life of a white settler leader, by re-

assuring women of the importance of a supportive domesticity, *Woman's Own* recreates the social division of men and women in capitalism. For its editorial staff this wouldn't be a contradiction. It's a question of producing a magazine.

One couldn't go around selecting articles "on people's political leanings", Iris Burton said, "or we'd never get the magazine out. That's why we have to choose things totally objectively." □

Ann Scott

* *Zimbabwe is the African name for Rhodesia.*

SPORTS CATCHING UP

Biologically and genetically there is no reason why women shouldn't at least equal men in sports, according to K.F. Dyer of the Department of Genetics at Australia's University of Adelaide.

He has looked at the world records for all athletic events

and compared the rate of improvement in female and male athletes. In short and long distance running, women have been improving faster — that means we're catching up on men.

Dyer thinks this proves it is not biological but social factors which have held women back in the past.

He found percentage differences between women and men runners varied enormously in different countries. In Communist countries women's speed and endurance is much closer to men's. This is due, he suggests, to "the differing expectations of women's achievements in the different countries and hence the differing training regimes they are encouraged to adopt, the different levels of participation of women in athletics and the different social rewards they are given for competing."

Between male and female swimmers the gap is narrower — the female national records of some countries beat the

male national records of others.

This he attributes to the difference in attitude to swimmers. Nearly everyone learns to swim, and there's little sexual segregation in classes.

An outstanding woman swimmer doesn't scare men as much as a woman shot-putter.

So Dyer reckons that male supremacy is softening and "we can clearly envisage a day when the supreme performances of male and female are likely to be equal". □

source: *Psychology Today*



WORK NEWS

'It's
really stirred
up the factory'

TRICO WOMEN WIN

After 21 weeks the equal pay strike at Trico's is over. We stood in the rain to cheer the strikers back to work — hundreds of women under umbrellas, jostling on the pavement of the Great West Road, Brentford, at 7.30 on Monday morning, October 18.

"We are the champions" they sang. A pensioner who had picketed nearly every day started chanting:

"What have we got?

Equal Pay

When have we got it?

NOW"

Television cameras glared in the half-light, a young black woman hustled everyone to get into fours, Bill McLoughlin, local AUEW official, said fall in behind the strike committee — and then they marched through the gates, past the settee they'd sat on all summer, now soaking up rain like a sponge.

The women laughed and waved to the crowd of supporters clustered round the gate — as we cheered and clapped I felt elated yet sad that victory had to mean return to the same old assembly lines.

Not Backdated

But so much has changed. The women have stuck together, stuck it out and won what they were fighting for — the same rate as men doing the same job. By strike action they have beaten the industrial tribunal that wriggled out of their case for equal pay, and forced the American-owned ear component company to give in. This means a rise of £6/6.50 each, bringing them

up to the same *operational rate* as the men (their *wages* vary according to speed, as they do piecework). On top of that the men and women got the 5% they're entitled to under this round of the government pay deal, and all holiday pay and sickness benefits guaranteed.

Full details of the settlement are not publicly available, but the only significant concession seems to be that the rise is not backdated to January 1 when equal pay became law. "That's because it's a negotiated settlement," said Sally Groves, an assembly worker at the factory. "We didn't get it through the Equal Pay Act — you could say we got it despite the Equal Pay Act."

Unique Situation

For weeks the company had used the tribunal's ruling as an excuse, saying that as the women weren't eligible for equal pay, it would go against the pay deal to give them a rise. But as the women and

their union didn't go to the tribunal, not trusting it to accept their claim, its decision isn't legally binding. But it does make this a unique situation — even without the full support of the men in their factory, the women have wrung equal pay out of an employer not legally obliged to grant it.

To save face, the company isn't saying it's lost. The official announcement that the strike was over was ambiguously worded — "Both union and employer agree that the terms of the Equal Pay Act have been complied with"; the company had claimed *that* all along. Apparently the ambiguity was also intended to stop the Department of the Employment asking awkward questions about whether this was equal pay or an excessive pay rise.

Back Inside

The women are sure they've won, and want everyone to

know it. And they've made other gains — a real community and a sense of solidarity with other workers. On Monday evenings they'll join the picket line at Grunwick's (see SR 52, p13), and they're giving the mainly Asian strikers there half the proceeds of their victory social, and half their first weekly levy of 10p a head; the rest will go into a fighting fund to support future strikes.

And they plan regular factory meetings to support one another. "Everyone must come," said Eileen Ward at the mass meeting where the offer was accepted, "No-one must ever stand alone again." They have agreed to come out in protest if there's any victimisation. "There's been some aggro since we went back," said Sally Groves, "but not as much as you might expect — some of the worst left during the strike."

"There's heaps of things to sort out now," she added. "All the differentials are up the creek, and a lot of men feel

The Strike Committee lines up — with a bottle of champagne

Stop Splitting Hairs, tribunals told

It's been hard for women to take the Equal Pay Act seriously. Even in cases where it applies, industrial tribunals have been ruling against us for the most trivial reasons.

But in October the first appeals were heard; in every case so far, the women have won. Justice Phillips, Employment Appeals Tribunal president, even instructed tribunals to ignore "trivial differences". In one case he ruled that the working of night and Sunday shifts by men does not make their work different from that of women.

It is crucial to use the appeals tribunals at this stage — there's no cost involved and they have the power to either reverse the verdict of an industrial tribunal or to refer the case back, with guidelines, for rehearing. What is more, it is the appeals tribunals that set precedents for case law.

It seems that the determined industrial action for equal pay at Trico's and pressure from unions and the women's movement, have shaken up some authorities into making the legal channels more 'appealing'.

Clare Cherrington reports on the first three hearings:

The Act says that when a woman is doing "like work" to a man, or when a job evaluation scheme has rated her work of equal value to a man's, she may be entitled to equal pay.

She gets it unless the employer can prove she's differently treated because of a non sex-based "material difference" between her work and the man's. Everything hinges on the interpretation of these two phrases. Tribunals took a

narrow view and by midsummer had ruled against women in 94 of the 130 cases heard.

Yet so far the Appeals Tribunal have done the opposite. First came the Kraft case: the women quality control workers at Kraft foods factory, Kirby, Liverpool had lost because of the statutory ban on women's night work. Actually factories can get exemption from this ban — Kraft simply hadn't. Pointing this out, the Appeals Tribunal ruled that the night work ban could not affect equal pay cases, and that the ▸

"MUST TRY HARDER!"

Twelve years of equal pay for teachers mean that women earn an average of 78% less than men. A Department of Education survey explains that women are less qualified and less ambitious than men and that they are concentrated in the 'lower' levels of teaching — primary schools.

Despite saying that women cannot compete for promotion on male terms and tot up long service because of child-bearing and family commitments, the survey concludes that the inequality is *not* due to sex discrimination.

Teaching pay scales reward power-seeking, so women who choose to remain teachers are criticised and small children are considered less important than university students. □

On first hearing..

★ Lloyds Bank has just lost its case against eight women finishers who were awarded pay equal to that of male messengers.

★ Vivien Saunders, the top golfer who was refused a job as a club professional because of her sex, has lost her case. The tribunal joined forces with the employers and asked her how she'd cope with brawling men. She plans to appeal.

★ In Manchester Ms Craven lost to Pilkington Glass on the grounds that she was paid less for . . . wait for it . . . historical not sex-based reasons. But as the appeals tribunal has just ruled out this type of material difference, perhaps she'll appeal and win. □

hard done by. It's really stirred up the factory."

It caused quite a stir when two days after going back one woman applied to be a forklift truck driver. Management was horrified — they'd hoped "women's lib" was left on the picket line. She got the job though, and starts training soon.

The clock office clerks scored a victory too. They were out all along in solidarity, though they

weren't affected by the claim, and as part of the settlement got an extra £1.50 a week. Come pay day, Atkins, the manager, tried to slide out of it, so they threatened to strike next morning. He paid up at once. □

Jill Nicholls

★ A Suspect Statistic: the Trico tribunal is officially listed as a success — because the applicant won!

NEW



A Rose was never Enough



In America, National Secretaries Week falls in April, when bosses produce a rose for their secretaries to show appreciation of their work. This year it was also celebrated by a demonstration in New York's Wall Street organised by a group called Women Office Workers (WOW), who declared that "A rose was never enough".

Office work, as women's work, is well-known as an area of low pay and status, and little opportunity; it's traditionally hard to organise. But in parts of America — like New York, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Dayton and San Francisco — groups have formed to try to change this situation.

Susanne Paul, representing New York WOW, was recently in London to talk about the group and share experiences. But there's no parallel group in Britain, though their Bill of Rights has similar points to our Working Women's Charter. Sue Sharpe met Susanne to find out about New York WOW:

The idea originated in 1973 at a conference for women office-workers, but no public action was taken till October 1975 when an Officeworkers Hearing and Speakout was organised. A panel of officials heard women's angry grievances about age and race discrimination, lack of prospects, sexual harassment and extra-office tasks. The

speakout got a lot of publicity and many women joined WOW.

Now there are 400 members after a leafletting campaign over the summer. To the monthly meetings come women of all ages, backgrounds and skills. About 5% are black; about 12% speak Spanish. Some joined as feminists, others through con-

APPEALS CONTINUED..

fact that the men at Kraft's occasionally lift heavy weights does not make the work "unlike".

The second case was the ironic affair at Fortes: a lone male waiter among many waitresses was promoted to "Banqueting Supervisor" a few days after the Act came into force. A tribunal consequently granted the women a rise for those few days... but the Appeals Tribunal ruled for a permanent rise, denouncing the "yo-yo" effect of the first decision.

The last and most crucial to date was the case of Capper Pass Ltd., North Humberside.

Here the employers lost their appeal against the judgement that a woman cook was to get the same wages as two assistant chefs, although they worked different hours, in different places, catering for different numbers. Calling all these differences irrelevant, Justice Phillips gave the general guideline to ignore trivialities.

But the Act still has its inbuilt limitations: for example, even in cases of similar work it is not applicable in firms which are under different financial management. But the appeals judgements make for a broader interpretation, which will open it up to more women. □

cern about job conditions. There are 800,000 women working in New York offices, and the initial response to WOW indicates widespread dissatisfaction.

"Too Mature"

WOW sees itself as a civil rights organisation and puts pressure on federal government agencies that support anti-discrimination. It collaborates with other women's organisations and black groups, and sometimes works with unions. Office-workers can join various unions. Susanne Paul says WOW may eventually become attached to a union, or become one itself — but first they need much more experience.

WOW is very much an action group, though they hope to set up a study group soon. Age discrimination is a major issue — age is asked on all employment agency forms. To show the effects of this, two WOW members, one aged 25 and one 50, with similar skills, visited employment agencies. The younger was offered several jobs while the older woman was often turned down on grounds of being, for instance, "too mature". In July WOW filed complaints about this with the New York Division of Human Rights.

Deskilling

Increasing automation is another important area which has brought many women into WOW. Finance companies are computerising clerical work, and legal secretaries are now the victims of a de-skilling process, as computerised forms of contractual language are introduced. Number machines are often worked by black and immigrant women speaking different languages — and language is a barrier to organisation. WOW hopes to hold a conference on automation this winter.

Health hazards in offices and unemployment are being investigated, and WOW is trying to build campaigns in specific industries. At present they're concerned with accounting in finance companies, where a rigid division is maintained between accounting office staff (usually low paid women) and accountants (much higher paid men). They are using this as a testing ground before taking on banking and insurance, where they have quite a lot of militant members. They always stress the need for women to act with WOW or the rest of their office behind them, so their jobs are not jeopardised.

"Sexy Young Chick"

Financially the group are dependent on membership fees and pledges, and money from churches and foundations. They'd prefer to be self-supporting but would need many more members first.

Their main concerns are full-time workers and aspects of discrimination and pay. They have yet to confront the difficult areas of temporary officework, or the more ideological questions of sexism in office relations. WOW exposed the sexism of employment agencies by hiring a man to telephone 100 agencies in New York asking for a "sexy young chick" — all were prepared to supply him. But it's relatively easy to expose sexist attitudes; it's harder to organise round them.

Susanne Paul is hopeful: "I think we'll evolve. We're raising consciousness, affecting some concrete issues like age discrimination, putting lousy pay on the agenda too, and making secretaries aware of issues so that they can argue in their offices." □

WOW produce a bi-monthly newsletter, leaflets and hope to publish pamphlets. They'd love to hear from women wanting more information, advice or discussion. Contact 600 Lexington Ave, New York, NY 10019, USA.

BETTER THAN NOTHING

DUNDEE: Over 20 women, almost the whole workforce at McLean's Potatoes, were laid off in September.

The forewoman, Agnes Rice, said, "We knew something was going to happen, and expected the part-timers to be laid off, but it was terrible to hear on the Monday morning that we'd all be out of a job on the Friday."

McLean's, which also owns farms in Angus, packs fruit and vegetables for supermarkets. With rising prices this is no longer profitable, and they're transferring what work there is to Carnoustie where, according to one of the women, "the country people will work for even less money than we get."

They've been earning £27.50 for a 40-hour-week, working in huge unheated sheds with leaky asbestos roofs.

Poor as the pay was, the women needed it. Ms Thomson explained, "I've got four children still at home, and my husband's unemployed. I used my wages for essentials. Even food will be a problem now. I got free vegetables there." □

Ingrid Muir

FAWCETT FOR SALE?

Are you a member of the Fawcett Society? If so, make sure you vote at the general meeting at the end of November to prevent the library being broken up.

For years the Society has been too short of money to properly catalogue or publicise their collection of books, pamphlets and letters which add up to a unique record of feminist activity and thought over the last fifty years. But it's only since the Society has been putting most of its energy (and funds) into lobbying for women's rights that the Library has been in real danger.

The trustees now plan to give the Library to the LSE, although they will only take part and integrate that, under traditional subject headings, into their existing library. The City of London Polytechnic have offered to keep the collection together and make it available to a wider public, but they do not have such close links with the Fawcett trustees. Others are now queuing up: the Labour History museum, and it's even rumoured, a bookseller who hopes to sell it all to the States for £30,000.□

If you'd like to find out what you can do, contact Mildred Surry, the former librarian, 01-373 7054.

COPPING OUT?

WORCESTERSHIRE: Just what they'd all been waiting for — a policewoman is leaving the force because she says the job's become too dangerous since the Sex Discrimination Act.

"I have faced dangerous situations and have been in scraps," says Kathryn Harvey, 24, of Rowley Regis, near Dudley, who joined the force six years ago. "Before the Act I was always off the streets by 10pm."

Policewomen used to deal only with women, children and missing persons, she says; now they have to do the same jobs as men. She's planning to become a social worker instead.

"Told you so — softies!" the papers chortle. But it just goes to show that in a sexist society it's absurd to pretend women are the same as men. The Sex Discrimination Act doesn't stop women being raped if they walk the streets at night.□

LEEDS: More feminists should get involved in their local community or alternative paper. This struck me at the recent Leeds conference *Paper Everywhere* attended by people from over 25 such papers.

Women were outnumbered three to one and back home the situation is often much worse. Sometimes only one or two women work alongside 11 or 12 men. All the women I spoke to deplored this and complained of a lack of support and understanding from local women's liberation groups, even when they try to increase coverage of women's struggles.

"They never tell me what's going on in the movement," said one woman from a West Country paper, "and then suddenly turn up with a really long article and dire warnings not to change a word."

PAPER EVERYWHERE

But writing for papers takes practice, and too many articles from inexperienced hands fail to communicate. The average reader either doesn't understand or becomes so bored that she gives up in disgust. Fact- and figure-packed collectively written pieces don't always make for the most stimulating reading.

We discussed the role of alternative papers and how far a paper can initiate action when it's not backed up by a political organisation. "The papers with the clearest layout, style, message, come from the paper groups who are clearest politically," said the representative from *York Free Press*, and no-

one disagreed.

The weekend should result in more national communication and co-ordination. The duplicated fortnightly *People's News Service* will now be used by alternative and community papers (and perhaps radical national publications) as WIRES is by the women's movement. Papers subscribe to PNS, then forward one copy of each issue to them free, marking the articles they want reproduced, and enclosing any national information they can't print, for example on the progress of fascist groups in their areas.□

Alison Garthwaite, who works on WIRES
Send accounts — not too long! — of what women are doing in your area to PNS, 138-142 Drummond St., London NW1 (01-388 0848). PNS costs 15p a copy, subscriptions £1.75 for 10 issues (£2.35 abroad).



MARK RUSHER (IFL)

Pensioners from all over London organised a week of protest in October demanding a pension of half the average male industrial wage (£36 for a single person, not the £15.30 they're due for in November), financial help with heating and no cutoffs. Thousands of old people died of cold last winter.

Pensioners' groups lobbied local MPs, and from Thursday noon to Saturday noon held a vigil outside the house of David Ennals, Minister of Health. Trying to stop the vigil, Ennals agreed to meet a small delegation at his Department. But they weren't impressed — "a load of parliamentary malarkey" they said. So 40 of them planted themselves in front of his £30,000 "luxury flat", disturbing the well-bred quiet of Highgate. He was 'too busy' to come and talk to them, but found time to leaflet his neighbours, who still chose to support the vigil bringing flasks of tea and blankets.

The pensioners kept vigil in shifts, sheltered from the driving rain and cold by a tiny plastic tent and umbrellas. One woman, Ada Picton from Brent, stayed the whole 48 hours; on the second morning she laughed, "I thought I'd be really cold and miserable by now but I feel great — it must be the brandy I had last night!" And she still had enough energy to help decorate the float which went from the vigil to the final rally in Trafalgar Square. "We haven't lived this long to be ignored to death," said Betty Harrison from the platform.

After speeches and songs they marched to Downing St. to present the heating petition (20,000 signatures in a black bordered envelope) to Healey. But guess what — he was away on business so his butler took it.□

SHORTLIST

Please send information to Anny Brackx, Shortlist Spare Rib, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1

events

Events are listed chronologically

Money In The Family

November 19. Diana Barker (University of London Institute of Education) will lecture on income distribution within the family. At the Women's Research and Resources Centre, 158 North Gower St., London NW1, at 7.30pm.

Abortion And Trades Unions

November 20. A one day conference for trade union delegates, taking place at the City University, St John St., London EC1. For details and delegates' credentials contact A Woman's Right to Choose Campaign, 88a Islington High St., London N1 (01-359 5200).

Fed Up With Discos

November 20. "We feel there is a need for a place which will be a real alternative to the disco scene, where there is space for women to play, sing and listen to live women's music; read poems, share paintings, photos; dance; talk; sell things we've made..." The first Monthly Women's Event will take place at the Basement, 29 Shelton St, London WC2, from 8-2. Entrance 50p and 40p for claimants. Rosemary and Jane, and Jam Today will play. Bring your poems, instruments, drawings...

Anthropology

November 21. The Women & Anthropology Group will talk about different anthropological approaches to women and recent findings about women's position in other societies. 2.30pm at Essex Rd Women's Centre, 108 Essex Rd, London N1 (01-226 9936)

Getting Independent

November 22, December 6 and 13. A series of educational meetings for any women interested in the technical aspects of taxation, social security, family law and how the system works to make women dependent. They are organised by the Campaign for Legal and Financial Independence and will take place at Essex Rd Women's Centre as above.

Abortion Tribunal

November 23. An organising meeting of the Tribunal Mobilising Committee. They are in the process of constructing the tribunal which will take place on January 29 in Central Hall, London. Anyone who wants to help organising

or collecting sponsorship is welcome. 7.30 at the London School of Economics, St, Clements Building (first floor), Houghton St, London WC2. Further information from the National Abortion Campaign, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1 (01-485 4303)

Child Benefits Now

November 24. A meeting starting 7.30, in the Grand Committee Room of the House of Commons "to show the government the strength of feeling there is still about child benefits despite their new compromise". Speakers: Stan Orme (Minister of Social Security), Jo Richardson MP, Alan Fisher (NUPE), Kenneth Clarke MP (opposition spokesman) and Frank Field (Child Poverty Action Group). Details from CPAG (01-242 9149)

Women's Films

November 26-December 5. The first International Women's Film Festival will be held in Copenhagen. There will be documentaries, feature films and video tapes on women and work, lesbianism, women and their bodies, women and children, third world women, the women's movement and more. Accommodation will be provided. Write to Karin Sten Madsen, Folkvarsvej 11, Copenhagen (106668).

National Conference

November 27. A one day working meeting will be held at the South Bank Poly Students Union, Thomas Doyle St., London SE1, to organise the next Women's Liberation Conference. The discussion will focus on when and where in London to have the conference, its theme and structure and who will take charge of the creche and catering. Contact the Women's Liberation Workshop, 38 Earlham St., London WC2 (01-836 6081)

Women's Festival

November 27. The London Students Organisation is planning a women's festival to be held at the University of London Union, Malet St., London W1. Workshops on theatre, music, poster-making, the politics of the women's movement, self-help, campaigning and lesbianism. In the evening there will be theatre, and music by Jam Today. Admission 50p for the day and 30p for the evening. Contact Chris Rutson, 129 Clifden Rd., London E5.

Women In Ireland

November 29. 8pm at the Roebuck pub, 108a Tottenham Ct. Rd., London W1.

November 30. 7.30pm at Hammersmith Town Hall, King St., London W6. The women who went on the National Labour Movement Delegation to Ireland will report back, especially emphasising women's situation in Ireland now.

Abortion

December 1. SE London branch of the National Abortion Campaign are planning a public meeting to take place at 7.30, Deptford Town Hall, London SE14. The theme is 'What is happening to your abortion rights?'. Speakers, film and discussion. If you want to help, contact Linda (01-318 0834)

Feminist Seminars

December 1. On socialisation, the family, women's work, methodology, law, sexuality, welfare, psychology, men, ideology, etc. "We will provide space for four concurrent seminars to take place each meeting. Each woman can then choose which of the four to attend that week, although we hope there will be some continuity within each of the individual seminars." They are fortnightly and this one will take place at noon in the TV Room, basement of St Clements Building, London School of Economics, Houghton St., Aldwych, London WC2. Details from Sandy (01-263 3039) or Eva (01-340 8555).

Economics

December 3. Jean Gardiner will lead a WRRRC seminar on women and economics. 7.30pm at the WRRRC as above.

West London Conference

December 4. A conference which aims to bring together campaigning and consciousness raising groups in West London. Workshops on group work techniques in consciousness raising, education, nurseries, housing, trade unions, women's centres and refuges. To be held at the Methodist Church Hall, Lancaster Rd, London W11 from 10-6. There will be a creche, and a disco in the evening. Tea and coffee will be provided but lunch has to be brought. Small entrance fee.

Abortion Disco

December 4. There will be a National Abortion Campaign fund-raising disco at the Basement, 29 Shelton St., London WC2, from 8-1.30. All welcome. Entrance 50p.

Pre-School Playgroup Workers

December 6. "The next meeting of the London Pre-School

Playgroup Workers is in County Hall, London SE1, at 8pm. We belong to the National Union of Public Employees and are particularly keen to have representatives from all Greater London Boroughs. We have made progress in recent pay negotiations and are anxious to see or hear from any playgroup worker who is interested in joining a trade union." Contact Vivien Thomas, 20 Lynton Rd, London N8 (01-348 0829)

Women's Studies

December 11/12. This mixed conference, which is being organised by a women's collective, will discuss women's studies here and abroad, the need to popularize them as well as being critical of them. To be held at the Ashburn Hall, Manchester University. There will be a creche. Fees: £9.50 for residents and £6 for non-residents. Details from Elinor Kelly, Department of Extra Mural Studies, University of Manchester M13 9PL

Singing and Playing

December 12. Women involved with music will talk about various approaches to women and music in the past and now. There will also be singing and playing. Starting 2.30 at Essex Rd Women's Centre as above.

We do not want to be London chauvinist, please let us know what's up in your area.

art

Gwen John's Work

150 Gwen John drawings and oil paintings, purchased by the National Museum of Wales last summer, will be displayed for the first time between



November 25-January 2 at the museum in Cardiff.

Open Exhibition

A new national open exhibition is being held at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge on April 1, 1977. Sending-in days will be in mid-February.

Entries are invited from artists living in the UK (excluding full-time students). Prize money totals £5,000 with a further £1,500 available for purchases.

It's open to work in all media — painting and constructions, drawings and other work on paper, photographic and textural work — providing it hangs on a wall, occupying not more than 16 sq. ft. Contact the sponsors, Tolly Cobbold Breweries and Eastern Arts, 30 Station Road, Cambridge.

projects

Feminist Theatre

Monthly meetings are now being held where performers, writers and researchers, interested in feminist theatre can discuss mutual problems and give supportive criticism of work in progress. Contact Jules Hollidge, 95 Barnsbury St., London N1

Spanish Health Group

A group of women who meet on Mondays and Thursdays at 7pm, 421 Harrow Rd (third floor), London W10, to learn self-help health skills. Following the success in Spain of their contraception handbook, they are now working on a booklet about VD, the use of the speculum, and breast examination, for distribution in Spain. They need £1,000 to cover costs and are asking for contributions which can be sent to Box 33, 142 Drummond St., London NW1.

campaigns

Acting Against Fascism

Bolton Women's Liberation Group is researching into fascist movements and women; the National Front now; and Asian women and their children. They also want to start a self-defence group and need a teacher or advice on good books. Contact Bolton Women's Liberation Group, 52 Yewdale Gardens, Bolton, Lancs.

Lesbian Left

A collective of lesbians who are also feminists and socialists. The group meets fortnightly on Thursdays at the Women's Liberation Workshop, 38 Earlham St., London WC1. It is undertaking both practical action, such as picketing with the Trico women strikers, and also discusses sexual politics and socialism.

1977

Lunar Calendar

The 1977 Lunar Calendar is a time chart based on the cycles of the moon. It is designed to bring woman closer to her natural time keeper. Created and produced by an American Woman's Workshop, it illustrates the thirteen lunar months — explaining the derivation of their Celtic names — by setting out the daily phases of the moon with moonrise and moonset times, transits into the houses of the zodiac, equinoxes and eclipses.

It also contains well-illustrated articles on tides, healing, the female cycle, pre-history, astrology, witchcraft and a centrefold explaining "the Goddess in her many guises".

This neatly designed calendar

is available by mail in this country from Luna Press, 146 Sandyhill Rd, London SE18 at £3 + 57p postage per copy.

Ivana Wattis

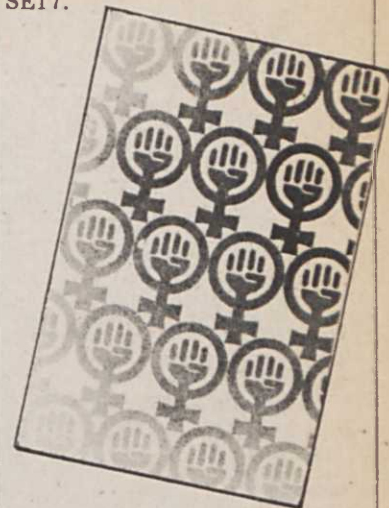
Every Woman's Almanac

Produced by the Women's Press of Toronto, well-illustrated and full of useful hints, this diary "will mellow with use. Crack the spine; pages are sewn in . . . and will not drop out, or rip out. Handle this Book!" Orders to The Women's Press, Suite 305, 280 Bloor St. W., Toronto, Ontario, Canada. One copy costs \$3.95 + postage.

See Red

The See Red Women's Collective, which screens posters for the women's movement, has produced a calendar with a different silkscreened picture for each month (17"x24"). £1.50 + 10p postage per copy

from 16a Iliffe Yard, London SE17.



A pack of 10 Spare Rib cards and envelopes available at 30p. Each card contains a list of women's centres around the country (though some are out of date).

film

Crimes Against Women

The International Tribunal On Crimes Against Women was held in Brussels from 3—8 March 1976. "The report on the tribunal — a half hour black and white video tape — is an edited document of this meeting, attended by 2,000 women who told of rapes and batterings, of gynaecological crimes, of oppression inflicted on lesbians . . . and ways of counteracting these injustices." Further information from Mary Sheridan, 23 Batavia Rd, London SE14 (01-692 6925) or The Other Cinema, 12/13 Little Newport St, London WC2 (01-734 8508)

Women's Cinema

A new Women's Cinema Season has started. Every other Sunday, 2.30pm at the Basement, 29 Shelton St., London WC2. Membership £1 and admission 50p per session. For details of the programme (01-836 6081)

plays

Counter Act

"We are rehearsing a play about nurseries. Written for nursery workers, mothers, trade unions, tenants' and women's groups, it demands free nursery places for all children and explores the relationships between nursery workers and mothers as well as the exploitation of both in capitalist society. It will be ready in the beginning of December." Contact Nursery play, Counter Act Federation, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (01-607 0376)

journals & articles

Women Artists Newsletter

This New York based publication looks uninviting with small, type-written print crammed into eight pages, and sparse illustrations, but the modest format conceals some of the best feminist writing on art around — neither affected nor impenetrable.

The selection of articles show that a feminist critique of art and its context goes way beyond the demand for equal representation in exhibitions. For example, the political implications of art techniques are examined: Therese Schwartz explains why she uses collage, there's a report back from a national conference on mural painting, and Wanda Widely describes how to prime a canvas.

The workings of the art world are wittily exposed, and short snappy reviews give concise criticism of women's work rather than offering cosy support.

Women Artists Newsletter, Box 3304, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10017. \$5 per year (10 issues).

Rozsika Parker

Equal Pay on Trial

Industrial tribunal rulings on equal pay are criticised in the September issue of *Labour Research*. Giving details of six cases, they conclude that "equal pay problems are better sorted out in the workplace, and a tribunal used only as a last resort".

Even if two jobs can be established as the same or similar, a so-called "material difference" can then be dragged in to abolish the claim —

something supposedly "other than sex" (and probably quite irrelevant in practice) such as the "responsibility" or "extra obligations" of the men.

Labour Research also argue that information about tribunal decisions should be made easily available to the public — we'll second that! You can get this useful, thorough article from LRD, 78 Blackfriars Rd, London SE1 for 25p + postage.

Jill Nicholls

pamphlets

Working Women for Freedom

Women workers/women thinkers merging ideas and action, emerging as innovators and creators of a new age. This is what Working Women for Freedom is about. "A history of women, white and black, who live in this pamphlet through their experiences as production and office workers [and as unemployed], and who wish to uproot this whole exploitative, racist, sexist system."

Produced by a Detroit women's liberation group, the struggle in the United States features centrally, but it is always placed in a wider international context: "the women's voices are being raised everywhere demanding a new reality". The pamphlet is consistent in this sense, ending in a description of women's pivotal role in the Portuguese revolution. The appendix on women as thinkers and revolutionaries is by the inspiring marxist feminist Raya Dunayevskaya.

Working Women for Freedom can be obtained from Bob Potter, 98 Addison Rd, Hove, Sussex BN3 1TR, at 50p per copy.

HEALTH NEWS

'I had an itch I couldn't explain...'

"Welcome Healthy Ladies!" The notice told us we had arrived and set the mood for the second Women and Health Conference in Manchester at the end of September, writes Ann Oosthuizen. This was not a conference about illness or fear of illness, but a positive and joyous occasion for us to share our knowledge and thus gain power over our own bodies.

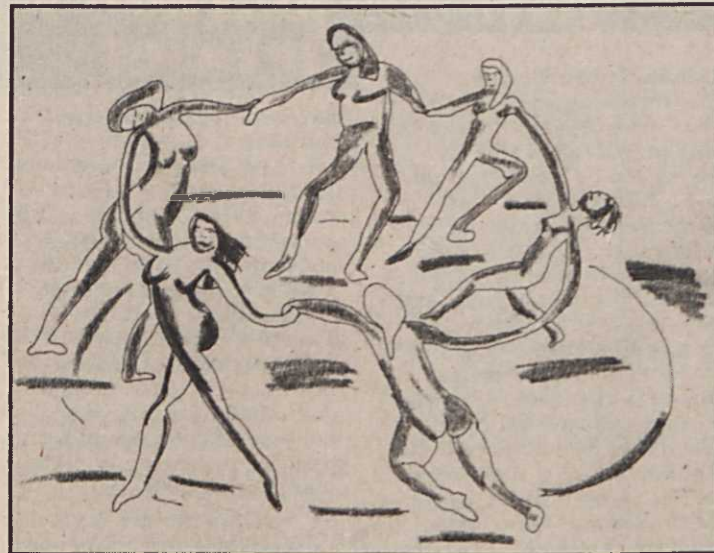
As women setting out towards freedom, wanting to define ourselves, we find we are chained by our bodies to a medical service which is dominated by specialists. We are intimidated by their authority, and so deprived of control of our lives. How many women have looked at themselves without shame, how many have used a speculum and know what it is the doctor sees when they're spread out on the couch.

So the emphasis at the conference was on learning, not teaching. No-one was an authority on women, but each of us knew what it was to be a woman. We were greedy for information: we wanted to know about contraceptives, we wanted to know how to do a self-examination, to know what our cervix looked like, what rights we have when our babies are born. We wanted to know about menopause, menstrual pains. We were learning skills. We wanted to rediscover what our grandmothers knew about the different properties of herbs. We wanted also to be more at home in our bodies, to find a new grace, so there were sessions on yoga, massage, nutrition, movement.

Sharing Our Joy

There were long debates on the dangers of setting up alternative structures that would not be available to our sisters. The conference demonstrated how much women need each other. An experience I will never forget occurred in a session on menopause. Four of us, all over forty, sat rather embarrassed in one of the smaller meeting rooms. We were afraid of what would surely happen to our bodies, unconfident about who we were and of our sexuality. Talking about this made us all stronger. We found we had quite a lot of information when we shared it. Suddenly another sister entered. She was in her thirties, her energy, her aliveness lightened the room. She sat cross-legged on the floor, asked us what we

had learned. We confessed that we were sharing our fears and confusions. "Oh," she said, "I can't wait for the menopause, I can't wait to be sterile." It was as if a great weight was lifted from us. What, after all, were we afraid of? We shared our joy with each other.



What will follow from the conference? Charmian Kenner reports:

The practical sessions may have given us the confidence that we *can* have control over our own bodies. But it constantly came up in discussion that our basic right to have this control, and to remain or become healthy, is not recognised by the present medical system. Health is something kept separate from us, "dispensed" to us by bureaucracies like the NHS, which have little regard for women's needs. We discussed how to tackle this situation.

Among issues raised were: **Midwifery** — A midwife is no longer considered as a practitioner in her own right, as someone who is "with" women in a very real sense. Her responsibilities and skills have been taken from her until she is often only a doctor's helper, working in a hospital where

women about to give birth are treated as objects.

The Association of Radical Midwives is a recently formed support and study group consisting of about a dozen midwives and student midwives from around the country. They hope to organise a day conference for midwives — contact Jenny Spinks, 8 Burngreave Bank, Pitsmoor, Sheffield 4.

Home births — Women are discouraged in every way from having their child at home, often by the use of incorrect information and emotional

blackmail. The Society to Support Home Confinements wants to help women fight this situation. Contact Margaret Wright, 19 Tynedale Terrace, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 12.

What should we aim for now?

— Women's health groups provide a way to learn skills and share them with each other. There is no "doctor-patient" framework, in which one dominates the other, and in which medical help is a "service" provided in an emotional vacuum. But even if health groups become more widespread, there is a limit to what they can do.

How can the caring atmosphere of women's medicine be brought into the NHS? Should we set up alternatives to the NHS, or attack it for not providing the care it should be giving us?

Most women felt we should campaign from all angles. We can fight hospital closures. We can support hospital staff in

MATERNITY UNITS - between home and hospital

Women in Portsmouth are fighting to keep their maternity unit, threatened with closure as part of the public spending cuts.

Sylvia Courtnage reports:

Barbara Taylor of Portsmouth started a petition to stop the General Practitioner Maternity Unit being closed while expecting her second baby in May.

"My midwife told me that the unit was in danger and that, as a patient, I ought to do something about it. I've collected over 500 signatures which I hope to present at a public meeting arranged by the local Community Health Council."

Officials have been unwilling to admit that closure was likely, but the Hampshire Area Health Authority Report for 1977-1980 welcomes "the intention to amalgamate the unit with the city's main maternity hospital."

The GP unit was opened in February 1969. It was purpose-built at a cost of £50,000 for patients of the city's family doctors. Mothers prefer the personal attention they receive there, which can't be provided at St Mary's, the 150-bed maternity hospital. They are attended throughout by their own doctor and mid-wife, unless there are complications, when help is close at hand.

their fight for decent conditions for themselves and their patients. We can distribute leaflets and/or picket at focal points like ante-natal clinics, to inform women using those facilities of the problems they may encounter. At the same time, we could aim to provide a real alternative — a feminist health clinic would be a centre where some women at least could experience a different kind of medicine, and so become more likely to put pressure on the NHS. □

We agreed to start a monthly health page in WIRES (see Leeds page) in which ideas and information about activities can be shared.

Not a Cattle Market
 Pearl Hodgson, 23, said, "It's nicer to be under your own doctor. You really get to know them over the nine months. It gives you a lot more confidence than you would have with a stranger."

Heather Leaper had a baby daughter at the unit last December. "I attended the antenatal clinic at St Mary's until I had a miscarriage. It was like a cattle-market. But the GP unit is not like a hospital. You have privacy, so visitors don't have to whisper."

"A lot of women are put off by having too many men doctors around — who can't possibly know what it's like. There were no complications, so I had my baby with only the midwife present. They let me keep the baby with me. In a hospital where the baby is taken away, screaming, you're left wondering whether anything's wrong."

Gillian Thorn, a local antenatal teacher for the National Childbirth Trust agreed: "Continuing care with GPs and midwives counts. Women gain confidence from knowing the midwife delivering them. They have discussed the kind of

breathing they're going to do with her, so she can give more support. It's the nearest thing possible to a home delivery."

Working Relationship
 Portsmouth GP Doctor Chris Ayling, who chairs the unit's management committee, said he came to practise there because he was interested in obstetrics. "Over nine months, one can develop a good working relationship with the patient and there is the satisfaction of seeing things through."

"We take only absolutely straightforward deliveries. Mothers who are under 18, over 30 or having their first baby are advised to have it in a hospital — although the rule is not rigid. The patient has a right to hospital treatment if she wants it, but I feel the unit offers a desirable alternative."

Barbara Taylor agrees: "The unit's just terrific. I had my first baby in hospital, and the contrast is amazing. I don't think I'd have believed it if I hadn't experienced it."

"The campaign to save the unit may seem futile, but at least they won't be able to say that nobody cared." □

Getting Under Our Skins

Swedish researchers have developed a contraceptive for women which has to be surgically implanted. A member of the team called it "a very good alternative to the pill", though he doesn't think it will replace the pill.

The British Medical Research Council and the Family Planning Association have not yet disclosed an opinion on this new method.

All we know is that the contraceptive in question is a 1.2" silicone capsule which is implanted, under local anaesthetic, in the underarm; that it works on the basis of progesterone, and that it could contain a hormone supply which is released over one year or more, thus preventing pregnancy as no ova would be shed. Women using this method would also stop menstruating



over that period.

The tests were begun in Sweden, on some nurses, in 1974 and it will apparently take another two years before extensive medical trials will start.

Wired Up

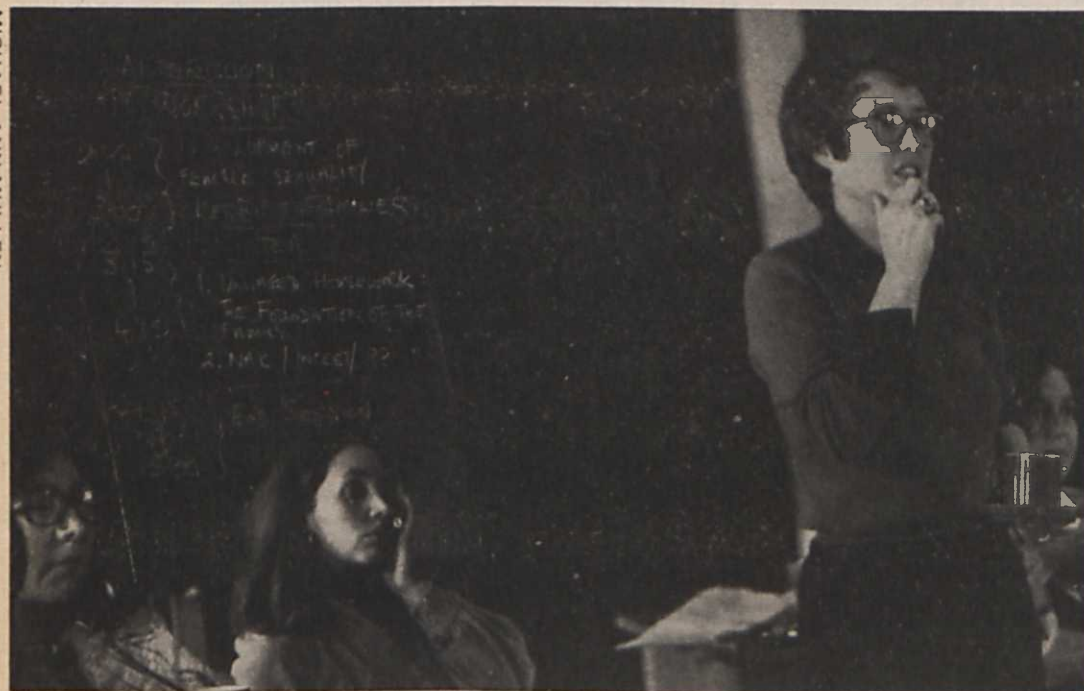
Anybody doing research on the early detection of breast cancer must be doing us a service. But what we gain on the swings we seem to lose on the roundabouts. Indeed Dr Hugh Simpson of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary has landed us with a bra.

It contains five sensors, which measure and record temperature changes at points on the breast every ten minutes over a 24 hour period. Cancer cells could thus be discovered in their earliest stages and removed by drug treatment.

With some modifications in the monitoring system, this device, which would cost a mere £200 a go, could also be used to indicate the safe period.

All in all it sounds as if technology is invading our bodies. □

Anny Brackx



The South West Regional Women's Conference was held in Chippenham on October 16. It was small and friendly, with women from Bristol, Bath and Chippenham and a sprinkling of women from rural areas.

The fact that few women from further west were there seems to indicate that the women's movement in the west country is weak and underdeveloped. Why is this so? There are Women's Aid centres in Exeter and Plymouth, and women from these areas have attended regional conferences before. But what else is going on? Is solidarity among women on a feminist basis developing in the west country?

In a workshop on marriage the isolation of gay women, single women and unmarried couples in small communities was referred to, and in a workshop on rural women we discussed the isolation of rural women of all types. This makes you think that feminism is not only relevant to women in large urban areas. □

The next SW Regional Conference will be in Bath sometime in March. For details contact the Bristol Women's Centre, 44 The Grove, Bristol 1 (0272-22760).

Michael Ann Mullen

NEW ABORTION GEL

OXFORD: A "do-it-yourself" abortion gel invented at the John Radcliffe Hospital sounds like a scientific breakthrough that could give us more control — if we can get our hands on it.

So far four local women have aborted with the gel, and over 30 with the earlier prototype — a pessary developed in ▷



'We're in this thing together'

In September, 60 people from trade unions, women's groups and community groups went on a delegation to Ireland. Here two of the women delegates describe what they saw and did:

The delegation, organised by the Troops Out Movement, supported the right of the Irish people to national self-determination — this meant sympathising with Catholic working class people who are in a majority, counting both North and South. So it was agreed in advance not to meet with Protestant organisations. And unfortunately the Official Republican Movement refused to meet the delegation, assuming it sided with the Provisionals.

We two saw it as an opportunity to find out for ourselves what's happening in Catholic areas. Although most people we spoke to supported the use of violence to defend their areas and to get the British out, we mainly discussed with them other ways they were organising — prisoners' aid groups, housing committees, nurseries, community action and cooperative workshops. Most of this gets no mention in the British press.

The three-day trip was made up of formal and informal meetings, visits to Dublin, Crossmaglen and Belfast, and two socials. People were overwhelmingly friendly and generous.

Because of space, we have concentrated on the North.

The presence of the army is an everyday thing for people in the North, but for those of us there for the first time, it was a terrible shock.

We expected barracks to be like barracks here, respectable brick buildings. But there, the barracks are huge corrugated compounds covered in barbed wire. You can't see inside, you only see the gun towers and slots for the lookouts. Most seem to be deliberately built near schools and houses. One is even in the grounds of the hospital where Maire Drumm was killed.

Then there's the soldiers themselves. The guns are so much bigger than you imagine, and the soldiers aren't just strolling around — they're permanently on a manoeuvre. There are usually about five on a street, following behind each other, jumping in and out of doorways and crouching behind cars, even crawling on their bellies.

There's women out shopping and kids going to school and amongst them the soldiers, totally out of place in green camouflage (that's the only green leaves you see in Belfast). We saw a young man being picked up. The soldiers sur-

rounded the van he was driving, hauled him out and took him away in a jeep.

One night two delegates were walking home with the woman they were staying with when they were stopped. They said it was terrifying because all you could see was the soldiers' eyes (they black their faces at night). The soldiers let them go because they were English.

We heard a lot about how soldiers stop young women for searching but use it as an excuse to feel them up.

Night time in Belfast is very dark. There are few street lights, and few people walk around. They either stay in or perhaps take a "Falls Taxi" (taxi run like a bus service at a low flat rate because there are so few buses and trains).

One woman in Ballymurphy said she lies awake at night till the army patrol comes round. If it makes a noise she doesn't worry too much, but if things are too quiet, she knows they're up to something.

The army's not just in working class Catholic areas — to get to the shopping centre you have to queue at army checkpoints, huge iron gates with turnstiles, concreted into the ground.

How do people cope? They resist

It is tempting to say people have brought all this on themselves by engaging in violence. But before 1969, Catholics had no voice in the North. They had appalling housing conditions, no nurseries, the

OFFENSIVE SEX?

The management of Thames TV, under pressure from the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), have made a last minute decision to drop the series of seven programmes *Sex In Our Time* because — and this is the only reason given so far — "they could not be transmitted without offending some viewers, even at a late hour." Eleanor

ABORTION GEL contd..

Sweden using the same drug, Prostaglandin. It's being used under strict medical supervision, but Mr Mostyn Embrey, who developed it, says there's no medical reason why tubes of the gel shouldn't be available at family planning clinics or over the counter in a year or two.

Both gel and pessaries are rated painless, need no anaesthetic and are safer than conventional abortions; they should be used very early in pregnancy. So far patients have stayed in hospital for a few hours in case of side effects like stomach ache, sickness and diarrhoea.

"The advantage of the gel is that it is effective with just a single shot," says Embrey. "The pessary has to be given in four doses at three-hourly intervals to be successful."

"I would personally like to see it used on an outpatient basis for termination of early pregnancies," he added. "Self-administration is not my main aim in this research." But it's clearly a possibility. □

Stephens retorts:

So long as sex is treated as dirty and trivial, a form of lavatory humour, it's OK and 'unoffensive'. Not so a series like *Sex In Our Time* which, despite its pompous title, did try to document and discuss changing attitudes to sex.

When I was asked to participate in the programme on women's sexuality and identity because of the articles in *Spare Rib*, and the self-help groups I was involved in, I felt suspicious. But after hours of discussion with the people making the series, and assurances that we would be involved in editing and have a final veto on what was used (in itself a breakthrough), we decided this was a good opportunity to get our ideas across. Some of us were filmed discussing myths of women's sexuality and looking at slides of genitals made by a self-examination group. The rest of the series (covering such topics as homosexual identity, alternatives to marriage, sex therapy), far from being pornographic was cautious and courageous. That Thames TV should ban our contributions with no consultation is insulting to all involved. That's why the staff union, ACTT, is demanding an explanation. And why while we live under a system of Establishment censorship, we might try to make louder noises about the sexist rubbish that gets past night after night without so much as a raised eyebrow. □

It might be worth writing to the Annan Committee on the Future of Broadcasting, Waterloo Bridge House, Waterloo Bridge Rd, London SE1 to complain about this or anything else on TV.

worst jobs and the highest unemployment. The police force in the North is recruited almost solely from Protestants, so that as Bernadette Devlin told us — if you're being attacked by a Protestant gang you can't call the police because you'd just provide the gang with reinforcements.

From English newspapers you get the impression that the struggle is just about small gangs of men shooting each other. But on the delegation we discovered that hundreds of people are fighting for the right to determine their own lives. Here are some examples of what we found:

One woman we spoke to had helped to organise a nursery. A group of them took over an empty primary school and asked local people to help pay for it (the council, run by Protestants, won't give money). The nursery has two purposes — to act as a balance for kids who have got nervous and hyperactive, and give them company, and to give their mothers a break.

The many nurseries set up now are mostly run on a voluntary basis, but once they are more established, the women hope to get outside funds (they have also attended night classes for nursery training). Any hut or building obtained in this way is used for other things too — sports, first aid, etc.

We also spoke to a member of a Housing Action Committee, formed a year ago, because "there was too much squabbling over empty houses and the people in the most need seldom got them".

Empty houses were often destroyed or bricked up, so a group of people tried to get things organised by giving leaflets out around the doors asking everyone to nominate a representative for their street. In New Lodge there are 40 to 50 street delegates who elect a committee of eight (currently five women and three men). This committee takes over empty houses, does them up and moves in people from their own waiting list (based on need). In this way the Housing Committees are taking over from the Council, which won't touch Catholic areas.

Inside Armagh

But the problems are still enormous. The struggle of women is not really recognised as such even by the women themselves. The idea of women's liberation is new in Ireland and a lot of women think of it as just dealing with contraception (which more

women than we expected supported).

Theresa Holland, one of the first women to be interned, talked about her two years in Armagh jail: "Before it never occurred to me that women were unequal, but when I went in, I realised you couldn't talk about women in an individualistic way. I began to think about the plight of the mass of women, and women as a mass have been made unequal. I'd been made to pull my weight at home and outside, when people said to me, 'You can't do this because you're a woman' I always had to show that I could. But in jail for the first time I sensed real comradeship and realised how great it was.

"We organised classes in Irish, history, English and did physical education. We held closed debates on all sorts of things like religion, abortion, contraception. I haven't been to church since I was 15 and it doesn't cause a rift with those who do, because we realise we're in this thing together. With women so involved in everything now I think there is a growing sense of women's liberation and everything that means." □

One of the writers is a shop steward in a hospital and member of Big Flame, the other is in a Women's Aid group.

HOME FROM THE MINE

DERBYSHIRE: Valerie Lovatt, 55, canteen assistant at Shirebrook Colliery, has finally won her right to equality within the National Union of Mineworkers.

At first her application for a National Coal Board home was refused on the grounds that she was a divorcee and therefore classified as single, even though she lives with her teenage son. Peter Heathfield, the Area General Secretary of the NUM, who supported her claim, said "We pressurized the union until it was agreed that Ms Lovatt was entitled to the same benefits as any of our male members."

Valerie is now on the waiting list for a home. □

Pregnancy Pay

LIVERPOOL: Rosalie Roberts, who works as a packer for British Insulated Cables, has pioneered a new area of benefits during pregnancy. She complained to the Liverpool industrial tribunal that her firm had refused to pay her sickness benefit when she was off work for three months due to complications in her pregnancy.

The firm, who quibbled over the terminology in her contract,

had to hand over £150 in back pay to Ms Roberts, who claimed they were contravening the Sex Discrimination Act. It's not yet clear whether the ruling will apply in other cases. □

EASIER INJUNCTIONS

Women with violent husbands need better protection in law, reports the Law Commission.

Instead of having to go to a high or county court to get an injunction, women should be able to get the equivalent from a magistrate's court. This would be a simpler procedure, and more accessible to most women, as magistrates courts are nearer home.

The Commission recommends that magistrates be able to issue a "personal protection order", prohibiting the husband from using threatening violence (defined as physical, not psychological) against his wife or children, and an "exclusion order" keeping him out of the house. Both would be enforceable by fine or imprisonment.

* Jo Richardson's Domestic Violence Bill, which allows women to apply for injunctions without starting divorce or assault proceedings, and gives the police power to arrest men for breach of injunction, is now awaiting royal assent. After months of delay, it will soon be law. □



BARNET: Women from the Barnet and Enfield Women's Aid groups demonstrated in front of Barnet Town Hall on October 5; they were demanding a refuge for battered women and their children. They have the support of Labour councillors but the Tories voted against providing a refuge. The women will go on lobbying and put their case to the council again in six months.

Meanwhile Chiswick Women's Aid continues to fight for its 'open-door' policy. Hounslow Council charged Erin Pizzey with allowing over-crowding at the refuge and a magistrates court let her off. The council appealed to the High Court which found her guilty, despite the crowd of supporters outside pointing out that all they needed was more space. Erin Pizzey may appeal against the decision to the Lords. □

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If interested in forming disabled women's coalition contact Sharon 254 2467

Chelmsford (Essex) and district. Would feminist sisters in group, or individuals, please make contact with recently arrived Londoner, to arrange meeting: Sandra Oliver c/o Anglian Regional Management Centre, Danbury, Essex. Tel Danbury 4144

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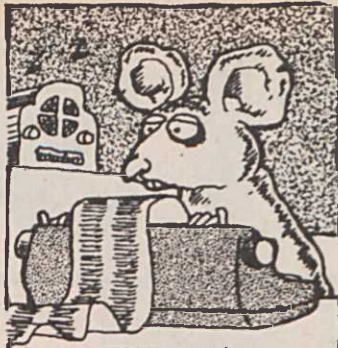
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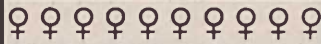
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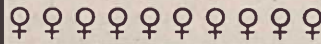
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reviews



A quiet domestic scene from *The Omen*

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reviews

PLAYS

ANY WOMAN CAN

by Jill Posener

Any Woman Can is a play about lesbianism, currently on tour with Gay Sweatshop. See below for contact address. In the course of discussions with different audiences, the play has been slightly changed to emphasize ideas which are central to feminism: the link between male/female role-playing, which arises from the sexual division of labour in the nuclear family, and the role-playing which can occur between any two people living outside a familial structure, but still within bourgeois society. With this in mind, *Any Woman Can* deals with two aspects of homosexuality. We see Ginny, the lesbian heroine, struggling to come out and declare her sexual orientation as something valid in itself; while, at the same time, questioning the structure of her past relationships — must she forever play femme to someone else's butch, strong mother to someone else's terrified child; or closet lover to someone else's avowedly heterosexual wife.

I felt that the play was confused in both these aspects. It opens with a speech by Ginny where she expresses both pride in her active sexuality and in being a lesbian. But a teasing reference to lovely lesbian nurses touching up their female patients in hospitals condenses the two sorts of pride into one stereotype image of the lesbian as predator.

When the play tackles the question of stereotypes and how to change them it comes across as over simple and over moral. Because it does not explicitly recognise the way that personal and social conflicts reflect and inform each other, the play falls back on moralism. The way to challenge role-playing seems to be: struggle harder and become a good feminist lesbian who behaves correctly. We see Ginny experiencing conflicts but the play does not show her accepting and analysing difficulties in order to move through them. Instead we are presented with exhortations and a triumphalist ending: "Any woman can be a lesbian"; even though in earlier scenes Ginny's sexuality appears to be shaped by a specific experience: her years in an all-female boarding school.

In dramatic terms, the play

is most successful when Ginny is responding to impossible situations. There is for example the very funny cameo scene where she tries to get into a gay club, when entrance is to members only and she isn't one and doesn't know any. A lot of the time though, the play relies on a confessional autobiographical style. As a result Ginny is presented with much more sympathy than the women she interacts with. She always seems to be right and they wrong; she is a real human being while they remain stereotypes. And so ultimately *Any Woman Can* lacks dramatic tension and movement.

Michele Roberts

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For further information contact Gay Sweatshop, 10 Marius Mansions, SW17 (01-673 5992)

VINEGAR TOM

by Caryl Churchill

Monstrous Regiment, the feminist theatre group formed last year, is touring for the next few months with a reworked version of their first play, *Scum*, by C.G. Bond and Claire Luckham. They will also be performing a new play, *Vinegar Tom*, by Caryl Churchill, directed by Pam Brighton.

The new play is set in the middle of the seventeenth century, somewhere in the rural north of England, and, like *Scum*, looks at the history of the people from the women's point of view.

Vinegar Tom is the cat who belongs to Alice and her mother, women with neither husbands or property, semi-outcasts in a society which defines women's status in terms of their possession of such advantages. In addition Alice likes sex — and is used by the men, but also feared and despised for such non-conformism. The play carefully and evocatively unfolds the complex process whereby women such as Alice and her mother are 'made' into witches by the ignorance, superstitious and religious fears, and sexual hypocrisy of those around them. They become scapegoats for insufficiently understood events — illness, sexuality, pregnancy and abortion. Other women

are sucked into the whirlpool of witch-hunting and witch-pricking — one of those horrific tests made on women to see if they were witches or not, in which innocence could never win.

The play builds up a frightening process of simple brutality, through which various women — Alice, a middle class girl whose parents force her into marriage, the cunning herbalist woman, a simple minded friend — all struggle to get some grasp on their lives as women. They fail because the conditions under which they live are against them — and in part their own limited knowledge and understanding itself contributes to their bewildering persecution. Because the web of ignorance, prejudice and superstition is so carefully woven, it is not in any way a defeatist or pessimistic play, but one which clarifies and exposes many ideas and beliefs which no longer hold such strong sway today — such as the easy way in which the cat, Tom, comes to be seen as the devil's 'familiar', as soon as Alice and her mother are branded as witches.

The play is punctuated by songs which function as a related but detached commentary on the action.

To my mind some of the songs are problematic — the only criticism I have of the play. There is no hard and fast rule about how music should be used in the theatre, and one of the most exciting features of a great deal of fringe/political theatre is the presence of music and song alongside dialogue and action. But whether the music adds another dimension, or whether it appears to be an arbitrary addition, depends on the nature of its structural relationship to what is going on in the body of the play. Here the songs are sung very explicitly as commentary — not by 'characters', but by different members of the cast at different times. The music is modern and melodic — no apparent links with seventeenth century music. This in itself works as an effective contrast; a theatrical device which provides variety. But some of the words are sung to us as a straight gloss on the condition of women in the twentieth century, set side by side with the seventeenth century representations we see in the play. They imply a simplistic one-to-one correspondence between the condition of seventeenth-century women and women

today which, ironically, is the very opposite of the play's actual achievement — to unfold and explore conditions of life which are very different from our own.

Of course there are important parallels between sexist ideology then and now, but exactly what these are and how we can learn from them are questions already raised by the play implicitly; one song tells us how the family props up the state — implying that it does so now in the same way it did then. When the words are a direct commentary on the action, isolating one element in a scene and heightening and concentrating it (for example, one song with a simple drum accompaniment), the effect is superb. When both music and words are utterly twentieth-century, the shock of dislocation, meant to make the audience think about what we are seeing, is in danger of momentarily alienating us completely.

I have spent some time on the few jarring moments precisely because the rest of the play and performances are so good, and because the integration of different art forms in one production are difficult and perhaps need more analysis than a straightforward either/or play/musical. *Vinegar Tom* is both an impressive feminist play, and an impressive feminist theatre production.

Micheline Wandor

Scum

York Arts Centre, November 18-20;
Matlock College, Derbyshire, November 29-30;
Warwick University Art Centre, December 1-4.

Vinegar Tom

Aldershot West End Centre, November 22;
Portsmouth College of Art, November 23;
Salisbury, St. Edmunds College of Art, November 24;
Southampton, Itchen College, November 25;
Basingstoke Drama Centre, November 26;
Winchester Tower Centre, November 27;
London, ICA, Pall Mall, December 6-18;
For further information contact Monstrous Regiment, 59 Camden Square, London NW1.

BOOKS for children

WET-DAY WITCHES

(Deutsch, £2.50)

ON MY WAY TO SCHOOL

(Deutsch, £1.75)

text and illustrations

by Celia Berridge

An important feature of Celia Berridge's picture books is her commitment to the neighbourhood of Greenwich where she and her family live and which provides the context for her stories. This is nowhere more striking than in her first picture book *Runaway Danny* (1975, Deutsch), but her latest two books also have a local flavour and social depth with which urban children can easily identify.

In *Wet-Day Witches* Celia Berridge cleverly exploits the scope of the witch as a stock character in children's literature. Scratch beneath the accepted image of the witch — mean and ugly, an outcast — and you'll find an independent, imaginative and powerful female. No doubt it is this power as much as the evil and fantasy of witches that excite children so much.

Certainly, in *Wed-Day Witches*, Ben and Sally go the whole hog in their witch games, casting spells at each other, wreaking suitably witchy havoc and having great fun. This is a bright and lively non-sexist picture book, and can be recommended not least for its unique depiction of a boy playing out a traditionally female role.

On My Way to School is a little girl's pictorial account of going to school. She is seen making her way with her friend along and across roads, past roadworks and garages, and under bridges and through

the school gates. The middle pages give the feel of the size and life of a school — and then she's off home again. This tight picture book has strong, direct pictures and provides the satisfaction of recognising situations as they repeat themselves on the way home or can be picked out in the aerial view on the dust jacket. Above all the children are realistically seen in context, a context in which urban life looms large.

Both books suitable for the playgroup and infant school child.

Andrew Mann, CRW

WHAT KATY DID

WHAT KATY DID AT SCHOOL

WHAT KATY DID NEXT

by Susan M. Coolidge

(Armada, 40p each)

What Katy Did and *What Katy Did at School* turned into a six

part serial on BBC children's television (*Katy*) will no doubt prompt quite a few young readers to seek out Susan Coolidge's classic tales about 'irrepressible' Katy Carr. Quick off the mark, Armada have just republished their abridged versions with a photograph of TV's Katy on the cover.

Rereading the 'Katy' books (first published between 1872—1886) I was struck by their charm and their moral certitude. Coolidge's brand of spirited, independent American girl, as typified by Katy, was new for its time and is still enjoyable. If Katy's 'doings' no longer seem particularly outrageous the books' vigour and freshness are of more immediacy than many of the anaemic historical novels about the girls of that time which are published today.

Rosemary Stones
Children's Rights Workshop

BOOKS

THE WOMEN'S DIRECTORY

by Caroline Faulder,

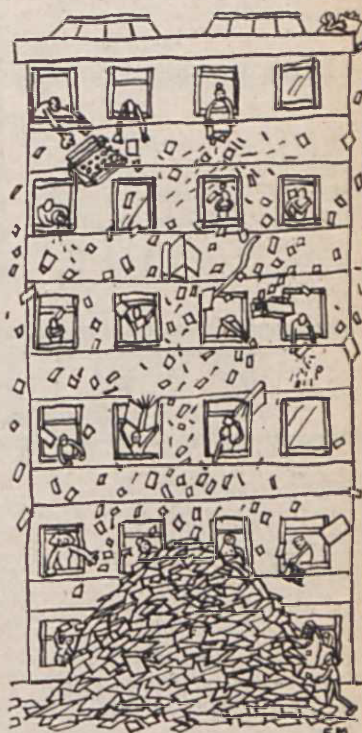
Christine Jackson,

Mary Lewis

(Virago, £1.95)

The arrival of this book should be greeted by the sound of chaotic card-index systems

being thrown out of the window, and little cries of delight from people in feminist information services. For if you have ever despaired of



getting all the important addresses, reading lists, film and resource lists into one place, together with explanation and discussion of the main issues of women's liberation (which neither sell a party line, nor are so vague as to say nothing), you can relax. *The Women's Directory* has done it.

Things move so fast that, sadly, a book of this kind is going to be out of date before very long; but we must hope that its sales are good enough to make at least annual re-printing and updating a possibility. At £1.95 it's about the price you would expect, and it is packed tight, well organized, handy-sized and easy to use.

Unfortunately it contains at least one serious error and there are some surprising omissions from the bibliography, for example *The Body Politic*. On page 132, areas covered by the Sex Discrimination Act appear as exemptions to it; and I also found the book's sub-title, 'A Self-Help Guide to Everything (my italics) Women are Doing and Thinking in Britain Today...' both overly optimistic and somewhat belittling.

But these objections should not detract from the admiration and gratitude I certainly feel for the women who have taken on a mammoth task of research and organization,



Katy

reviews

and have produced a book that may be one of the most useful feminist references yet published. Every home (and library, and political group, and helping organization) should have one.

Zoe Fairbairns

CORRECTION

Pluto Press says a male interloper invaded their advertisement for this book last month. Victoria (and not Victor) Greenwood is co-author of *Abortion in Demand* — and no mistake!

EXHIBITION

POST PARTUM

DOCUMENT

Mary Kelly

Traditionally, the ability to produce children and the emotional relationship that ensues has been held up as the reason for women's lack of creativity. Now, with the women's movement, it is beginning to be possible to bring motherhood, with all the deeply traumatic emotion and unrecognised elements involved, into the kind of examination it desperately needs. Mary Kelly's exhibition *Post Partum Document* is a crucial contribution to this. As an artist she forces into public view the unacceptable combination of roles mother/artist — a slap in the face for old guard concepts of the artist as freewheeling genius; as a feminist she focuses on the contradictory emotions that necessarily come with motherhood, which have been almost taboo as a subject for art in male dominated culture.

It is quite clear from the attention Mary Kelly's exhibition has received in the establishment press that it was a direct provocation to conventional concepts of "art". It is the form of the exhibition, its emphasis on work rather than art-object-for-critical-evaluation that causes so much outrage. A painting of a mother changing her baby's nappy would be easily overlooked as kitsch, but not so with dirty nappy liners annotated and placed within a discourse that needs work to be unravelled, and refuses to place the figure of the mother on view.

The exhibition comes within a radical art practice which refuses to see art works as purely objects in themselves but rather takes an exhibition

as space to give documentation the force of argument. It deprives the object of any market value and its meaning only truly emerges if the work put in by the artist is complemented by work put in by the spectator in reading the documentation and understanding the theories. But the complexity of the language in *Post Partum Document* and the many different ideas presented simultaneously did place a great burden on the spectator.

Mary Kelly described her previous exhibition *Women and Work* produced collective-

ly with Kay Hunt and Margaret Harrison as "a document on the division of labour in a specific industry, showing the changes in the labour process and the constitution of the labour force during the implementation of the Equal Pay Act. At the same time we were discovering how the division of labour in industry was underpinned by the division of labour in the home and that the central issue for women was in fact reproduction." Real objects, records (written, taped, filmed, videoed) were collected together as evidence focussing attention on a particular economic situation. Individually they may have been disparate without meaning, but linked and organised by the artists, the whole could take on a new level of significance.

In the *Post Partum Document* Mary Kelly uses her relationship with her infant son as her raw material. The exhibition has two distinct parts: objects and records acting as factual evidence of the past, framed and hung on the gallery walls, and written, separate documentation using Freudian psychoanalysis to give a commentary and structure to the actual exhibits.

The first room contained the (now famous) nappy liners and baby's vests dating from the period in which the child's needs and the mother's work meet to produce a complementary relationship (the dyad). At this point the mother's frustrated anxiety and the child's frustrated helplessness can be soothed by pleasure, partly through the eroticism of physical interdependence and partly through narcissistic satisfaction at their completeness as a couple. The second room contained an infinitely more complex record

of the child's gradual acquisition of language and the mother's notes as she tries to cope with the sense of loss that overcomes her as the child takes his first steps to social independence. The completeness of the two is broken as the father as authority and the nursery school introduce the child to another world of "law and culture".

In its appearance and presentation Mary Kelly's exhibition reduces the passion involved in this process to the minimum; her aim is to distance the emotion by putting the dilemma into a wider context: the way women's unconscious is shaped by the patriarchy. The exhibits themselves are touchingly reminiscent of women's traditional means of self expression (her diary showing so much self doubt, painfully collected and guarded memorabilia). She organises this material in an attempt to turn the most unspoken and culturally repressed of everyday experiences (mother-child relationship) into an art work inspired by feminism and psychoanalysis.

Mary Kelly's use of psychoanalysis is a direct result of recent work by feminists (Juliet Mitchell's book *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* and the conference on patriarchy held last May in London), and growing interest within the women's movement. This interest stems from the realisation that biological difference becomes overlaid by a cultural concept of sexual difference suited to the needs of a particular social order, which psychoanalytic theory can help us to understand. Thus "femininity" can be understood not as a natural essence but as a complicated edifice which the patriarchy demands in order to give "masculinity" meaning and strength. The little girl enters society "negatively"; her lack of penis gives the phallus significance and allows the male to fear castration.

Mary Kelly evokes the impact that producing a child has on women whose unconscious desires are formed within the confines of the castration complex: "During the ante partum period (gestation inside the mother's body) and continuing during the breast-feeding phase of early post-partum, the mother's negative place in the patriarchal order — more precisely the Symbolic — can be 'mis-recognised' because in a sense the child is the phallus for her." (Experimentum 1. Weaning from the Breast). As the child

grows through the various stages of increasing independence from his mother, she experiences a sense of loss that Mary Kelly describes as reliving her own previous Oedipal drama, undergoing castration for the second time and re-learning the fact of her negative place in the symbolic order. Within these terms, the mother has two possible roads open; recognition and acceptance of her secondary place or rebellion against it. Her rebellion takes the form of fetishisation of the child (as substitute phallus), clinging to the couple relationship and refusing to allow the child to emerge as an independent entity. Part of the fascination of the *Post Partum Document* lies here: the exhibition in all of its obsessive detail fetishises the child, but in this case, the mother has reconciled her "natural capacity" with her work as an artist. The art object as fetish replaces the child as potential fetish.

The exhibition throws a spotlight on the need to explore further the labyrinthine unconscious structures that lie behind the natural looking facade "motherhood", but Mary Kelly is limited by a theory biased — though not invalidated — by patriarchal assumptions. The influence of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan is heavily apparent in the *Post Partum Document*. But one important aspect of the exhibition prevails: it gives a voice to the pain and pleasure women have lived as mothers, understood by each other, despised as domestic by dominant culture. Mary Kelly's work comes in the footsteps of some of the very few women in the past who managed to be "artists" and constantly returned to the mother-child relationship in their work, women such as Mary Cassatt, Berthe Morisot and Julia Margaret Cameron.

Laura Mulvey

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Don't try to be sexy Ms Smith

MAGGIE MORRO



ALL RIGHT, so we've got the Sex Discrimination Act, and Women's Lib may be alive and well. But the fact remains... some men just don't like employing women.

A lot of girls are still not getting a square deal and it's time to ask: Just what can a girl do to show a prospective boss that she's just as good as the fellows?

The first thing, according to many employment agencies, is for girls to check that they are not simply asking to get the "anti" treatment.

Mr. Bernard Marks of the Alfred Marks Bureau explains: "Lots of girls play on their sex appeal when they are after a job. But they should realise it's their brains not their bosoms a firm is interested in."

"Girls who compete with men for jobs have to be extra careful to keep their femininity on a low key."

So... play it down when dressing for an interview.

● Don't wear dresses that plunge below your navel.

● Go easy on the false eyelashes and inch-long fingernails.

● When you sit down don't carefully reveal your knees. Keep 'em covered.

● And don't wear trousers. Some men, believe it or not, still reckon that women just aren't women unless they're wearing skirts or a dress.

If you're single, don't make a big play about what time you knock-off. And don't mention that your boy-friend's a 6 ft. amateur boxing champion with a terrible jealous streak.

Married women should avoid muttering about getting off early to collect the kids from school. That's your problem, not his.

So make arrangements for the kids before you get to the interview and tell your prospective boss what plans you've made.

Never ask where the nearest

supermarket is or which day it's early closing. Men are just not concerned that you've got to get something in for dinner.

Don't chatter about your personal problems. Don't giggle. Don't bite your fingernails, or pick your teeth. Or fiddle with your bra-strap.

Don't smoke without asking permission, and never pull your last boss to shreds, or suggest he was always lusting after you.

It doesn't help if you demand your holidays the next month. It does help if you show an interest in the firm's products and know a bit about them.

Be honest, of course. But not silly. Don't dwell on the fact that you missed getting your "O" levels by half a mile and haven't worked since the kids were born.

Show your future boss you are happy to have a go at anything — including making the tea — and that you are ambitious.

Above all don't come on too strong as a women's libber... just in case he happens to be a male chauvinist.

From the flyleaf of *The Modernisation of Sex* by Paul Robinson, published by Elek Books Ltd., 54/58 Caledonian Road, London N1. Sent to Spare Rib to be reviewed.

...ers of the age.

Taking this as his fundamental assumption, Paul Robinson here offers three 'intellectual portraits' of the most influential sexual thinkers of our time—Havelock Ellis, Alfred Kinsey, and William Masters and Virginia Johnson. Along with Freud they are the people who are most responsible for the way we have come to conceive of our sexuality today. He is concerned to identify the biases, tensions, and mo-

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Tooth & Nail

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SEXIST CUTTINGS, PHOTOS, QUOTES,
AND ADVERTISEMENTS TO
'TOOTH AND NAIL',
INCLUDING ALL DETAILS
WHICH MAY BE NEEDED BY
PEOPLE WANTING TO FIGHT BACK.

10.20 The Whitefriars of Aylesford

The Whitefriars are an Order of Carmelite Friars who live in an ancient priory at Aylesford, Kent. They are a lively community, who are visited by thousands of people annually — either on retreat or else for the day, when they attend Mass and often pour out their troubles to the friendly Brothers. The Whitefriars run a guesthouse, a pottery, a tea-room and a bookshop. Their household chores are done by Spanish Carmelite nuns and they lead a cheerful bachelor life. There are eight novices in the priory and they have formed their private pop group.

JENNIFER JEREMY

1.05 PLANET EARTH: Science fiction film about a future age when women dominate the world. Starring John Saxon.

From the Evening Standard TV Guide. Sent in by Sandy Gorman, London W11.

OFFERED: LIVE IN HOME-HELP/CHILD-MINDER

English post-graduate student seeking the necessary means to pursue historical research in the Boston area seeks Board & Lodging for himself, wife & 2 young children in return for wife's labour in above capacity. Oct. 1976-Sept. 1977.

fat is a feminist issue 2.



Susie Orbach

Like millions of women, Susie Orbach, co-founder of the London Women's Therapy Centre, used to be a compulsive eater. It led her to study, with other feminists, why women have eating problems and remain fat despite constant dieting.

Last month (*Spare Rib* 52) she talked about the meanings of fat for women; the often unconscious ways it helps us to cope with our lives in a sexist society. But becoming fat does not alter the roots of sexual oppression and remains an unsatisfactory, painful personal solution as well as an ineffectual political attack.

This month Susie describes how the therapy groups she started help women to break their addiction to food and to understand the sources of their need to be fat.

Interview by Rozsika Parker

How do fat therapy groups work?

A group has six to eight members and meets for two hours once a week. Each woman works on a one-to-one basis with the group leader and in some groups we have a 'twelve minute' rule which means that everyone is assured of talking for twelve minutes. This shows that everyone is entitled to time and space, that each person's experience is valuable, which is especially important for fat people who tend to be self denigrating and discredit their experiences.

At heart are people hoping that it will help them lose weight?

Yes, and if you are thinking of starting a self help fat therapy group, it's very important to be clear from the beginning that its purpose is not to take away fat but to develop a comfortable, nurturing, harmonious relationship to food and eating. The goal is for the compulsive eater to give up torturous starving and bingeing. Although once a woman has understood how her fat has served her and seen through her unreal expectations of thinness, she usually does lose weight.

How do women in groups start working towards the goal?

We always approach the problem on two levels at once. On one level you begin to appreciate the meaning being fat has had in your life, what messages your fat has been used to convey. For example, last month I described the way some women hold onto their fat to neutralize their sexuality in order to be taken seriously in their working lives. Many women fear that to be thin and hence 'sexy' means they won't be taken seriously. So we work on uncovering and demystifying those kinds of fears associated with the body states of fat and thin. And at the same time we work on new ways to approach food and hunger.

How do people get in touch with the way their fat has served them?

Groups begin by each member giving their weight histories, their feelings about their bodies and eating. When did the weight come on? When did you first become aware of your weight? Were there times when your weight changed measurably? Were there times when your eating was comfortable?

At the next session people generally report how many memories have flooded back. They often experience with great clarity themes that were raised the week before, like 'I noticed that' every time someone told me what to do, I wanted to stuff myself.'

It's worth keeping a journal to record your insights.

Having recognized that fat has been a sort of means of survival, do you start trying to understand what you think it's actually doing for you?

Yes, you uncover the fantasies associated with fat and thin through guided fantasy work. We touched on this last month. Each person in a group fantasizes herself fat and thin in a social situation. The group leader says, 'Close your eyes, I'd like you to imagine yourself getting fatter. You are now very fat . . . What does it feel like? And then imagine all your fat peeling away or melting away and in the fantasy you are as thin as you might ever like to be . . . Try and experience the thinness . . . how does it feel? . . . Try and contact anything scary about being thin . . . Try and go past how nice it would be and see if you can't get in touch with negative feelings.'

The second time people do the fantasy, as I said last month, they may discover that they are delighted that men don't hassle them when they are fat. They can be quite confident about the outcome of an interaction because it's not going to be sexualised.

How do you gain insights into what eating itself is doing for you?

Each person in the group keeps a chart of their eating patterns for about a week; when they ate, whether they were hungry, did the food satisfy them, what they felt like before they ate. You begin to get a sense of your eating patterns. Do you experience yourself eating chaotically or with consistency? How does it feel to realize that your food intake is so circumscribed by 'shoulds'? Wasn't it a real drag to eat that hamburger and salad in order to get to the ice cream you really wanted. It's also helpful to look at the circumstances in which you eat. Do you eat alone, in hiding, or do you have 'closet eating friends'?

What sort of things come up in a group when charts are discussed?

I remember one woman who seemingly inexplicably ate sweets periodically during the day at work. We discovered that the sweets were an attempt to sweeten herself, to make herself 'nice' when she was feeling angry because 'women shouldn't get mad, it's not nice.' It turned out that she was angry every time her boss treated her in a way that was particularly demeaning. She was paid to do research work, but was expected to serve coffee and look after male clients in the office. In the

Learning not to judge one's eating is difficult. Years of internalised rules don't fade quickly away. Turning off your internal judges; mothers, women's magazines, husbands, lovers, friends, diet doctors and nutritionists, requires a trust in self.

group we helped her practice to be more assertive with her boss.

A more equal work situation was arrived at and she found less need to cram her mouth with sweets. That's not to say all her anger disappeared. There are bound to be frictions in a boss-worker scenario but the anger was acknowledged and validated by the group for what it was and it became separate from her eating.

Isn't compulsive eating always a way of avoiding other problems? Won't groups inevitably become general therapy groups?

No. We say to people, 'Look you may have a lot of problems that you don't want to work on and that's OK, but it doesn't mean that you have to eat or diet compulsively in order not to look at those problems. When you are ready to look at them, you'll look at them.' The crucial thing is to bring the problem to awareness so that it need not be expressed indirectly through eating.

And as we said, eating in the face of stress may bring momentary oblivion but ultimately it just makes you feel worse, more incapable and weak in your own eyes.

Right. It's so reassuring when you can finally take care of yourself in the area of food, that you have a lot more confidence to take care of yourself elsewhere.

This really brings us to the aspect of the group work that you mentioned earlier — learning new ways to approach food and hunger.

Well, the most important thing is to stop judging what you eat and to stop dieting. Instead you start, with the help of a chart, to observe the way

you eat. Learning not to judge one's eating is difficult. Years of internalized rules don't fade away quickly. Turning off your internal judges, mothers, women's magazines, husbands, lovers, friends, diet doctors and nutritionists requires a trust in self. Being in a group with other women going through the same process can be of critical assistance and support.

I know that dieting creates the binge-starve cycle, but how can you give up dieting 'just like that' when for years it's been the key to your life; whether you are Good or Bad, in or out of control, a success or failure? Begin to see yourself as a normal person. If you can experience yourself as 'normal' then you can begin to eat like a 'normal' person; eating when you're hungry, not eating when you're only psychologically hungry, eating enough to satisfy hunger, and eating whatever food you really want.

Last month we talked about the way a compulsive eater is out of touch with sensations of real hunger — stomach hunger. You described how they eat from 'nervous hunger', 'in anticipation of hunger', 'to cheer themselves up' and out of 'mouth hunger — I really need to put some food in my mouth'. How do people in fat therapy groups start getting in touch with real hunger? You begin to identify the difference between stomach and mouth hunger by going without food for a couple of hours until you experience some hunger sensations in your body. You most probably will feel it in your stomach but some people feel it in their chests or neck. See how it feels for a minute or two. Is it scary? Do you associate pleasant or unpleasant memories with it?

Do people discuss their reactions in the group?

Yes. For example one woman reported that when she allowed herself to experience hunger pangs, she got in touch with a whole range of body emotions that she had successfully hidden from herself. She felt sexual. This made her quite uncomfortable because she believed that sexuality was sinful and inappropriate for women. By talking about this she was able to separate hunger pangs from guilt producing sex.

So you begin to understand the way you eat and why you eat, but how do you start eating only out of stomach hunger?

We tell people not to get too hung up ►

on this at first because anyone with a history of compulsive eating is bound to occasionally eat from mouth hunger. But try to start seeing your body as a finely tuned instrument that likes to be lovingly cared for. Having once experienced a hunger pang, figure out what particular food will satisfy that particular hunger. You might find a two-minute fantasy exercise helpful. Close your eyes and ask yourself 'What kind of physical sensation do I have and how can I best satisfy it? Do I want something crunchy, salty, chewy, moist, sweet? OK, do I want some potato chips? Let me imagine myself eating some. No, that's not it. How about some plain chocolate?' Find the food that fits the mood and eat. Eat as much as your body is wanting. Really taste each mouthful.

Are you saying that if you really satisfy yourself, you won't fall into the deprivation cycle — bingeing and starving?

Yes, I believe that our bodies can tell us what to eat if they are allowed to, because the body is a self regulating system. Once you carefully observe your eating and stop threatening yourself with deprivation you'll begin to recognize what will satisfy you but it can take a long time. The groups have worked for women from 15 years old to 55, but it can take anything from four months to four years to bring about the change in attitudes, values and life style involved.

You described how frightening people find it when they actually begin to satisfy their own needs. We talked about the psychological factors involved when you nurture yourself, but people also have a very concrete fear that if they give themselves a chance they'll never stop eating.

Yes, in the groups we play a game to deal with that and to smash the idea that it's dangerous to have particular foods in the house. We imagine a supermarket full of our favourite foods. Then we transport the goods to our home and imagine what it would be like to be surrounded with all that food. For most people it's initially nerve wracking: 'I'll never get out of the door, I'll always be eating.' But after sitting with the fantasy for a minute or two, people begin to feel protected with all that food around them. If the food is there, they know that they are never again going to deprive themselves by their own hand.

Are there other projects that groups can do towards learning to satisfy real

As you learn to think and feel in terms of wants, to listen and trust your internal cues, sometimes to your surprise you find that it isn't food at all that you want.

hunger and losing their fear of food? Each person can load her home with 'bad foods' that she feels attracted to and scared of. The only stricture to this scheme is economic. One woman was persuaded to keep enough ingredients for 75 ice cream sundaes with sauce, nuts, cream — the works. She exclaimed: 'But I'll eat it.' The idea seemed so sinful to her. I pointed out that if she had enough supplies for a minor army and could prove to herself that she didn't want to consume it all in one go, she would feel a lot more powerful in relation to being in control of her food.

But not only economic factors would interfere with such a project — what about a woman who is expected to feed her family? How can she cater wholeheartedly to her own needs? The issues that interfere with your ability to satisfy your food needs are more often psychological than practical. One woman I worked with discovered that as she began to take her own needs seriously, she called into question her role in her family which was to take care of everyone's needs while ignoring her own. Putting herself first in the food department was initially hard for her. She felt she was deserting her children, but she found that as she allowed herself to eat what she wanted, so the whole family became more autonomous in that area. Meal times became less tense. Everyone made something they wanted, and although there was some chaos in the kitchen, in the end members of the family determined more of their own food intake, and as it turned out, took more responsibility for other areas of housework.

Does recognising your food wants often lead to changes in other areas of your life?

Yes; as you learn to think and feel in terms of wants, to listen and trust your internal cues, sometimes to your surprise you find that it isn't food at all that you want. You might be wanting

a nap, a walk, to relax. Food as a substitute will leave you hungry.

Obviously respecting your own needs demands a level of self acceptance. Could we talk about ways groups help fat women — or women who feel they are fat — to stop hating themselves? Just being in a group is helpful. You can begin to see that other fat women have attributes apart from the fat. In other words, that fat has nothing to do with other values like beauty or creativity. Since the focus of the group is to accept the fact that 'one can't lose anything that doesn't belong to one', this process of recognising that fat is simply an objective statement about size is crucial.

How do people learn to accept their fat when compulsive eaters have such distorted self images with no idea of their actual size and experiencing their fat as trailing them, surrounding them, attacking them, not there?

Last month I described the way groups use a full length mirror to help each other see what size and shape they really are. They also draw unsigned pictures of themselves and pass them round the group. The point is to guess who is who and to help each other correct wrong perceptions. We have also taken photographs of group members and looked at personal weight histories through photographs.

Do you encourage people to weigh themselves?

No. Compulsive eaters are often hooked on the scales. If she has done well (lost weight) it allows her to eat. If she has done badly (gained) the scales throw her into a depression only relieved by a binge or a plan to lose weight yet again.

Instead of using scales, women do exercises to develop familiarity with their own bodies, to experience themselves as existing throughout their body so that feelings can come from inside rather than outside. What a woman feels inside is never validated. *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan* and other women's magazines have ideas about how we should feel, look and weigh. We need to fight hard against these ideas that have been so internalized and begin to rely on our own sense of self.

You made it clear that weight loss is not the aim of the groups but that it often happens when you stop eating compulsively. How can women help each other adapt to being thin? They can be particularly helpful in challenging each other's unreal expecta-

tions of what would be expected of them if they were thin. We talked of how women are in fact petrified of being thin because of the expectations that go along with it: 'If I am thin I should be competent, attractive, together, in good relationships'. In the groups women encourage each other to do all the things that they have been waiting to be thin to do, like dressing in clothes they enjoy. They help each other go shopping and help each other pack away everything in their wardrobe which doesn't fit so that they don't open it every day feeling that they are three different people — fat, thinner and future perfect. They help each other order 'bad' foods in restaurants. So that when they get thin — when they stop eating compulsively — being thin is not a scary, unknown place from which they flee by getting fat again.

What about dealing with other fears associated with thinness, like feeling that losing fat is to be weak and defenceless?

Guided fantasy can be useful here.

I believe that our bodies can tell us what to eat if they are allowed to, because the body is a self regulating system. Once you carefully observe your eating habits and stop threatening yourself with deprivation you'll begin to recognize what will satisfy you.

'Imagine you are thin and very strong and powerful. Imagine you are thin and you are talking to your boss and being taken quite seriously. Imagine you are thin and you are in a crowded subway and you manage to keep space around yourself.'

As you said, changing your attitude towards fat and thin takes time, don't lingering prejudices and fantasies

interfere with the groups' work?

Sometimes fat does work in the group in some of the ways in which it operates outside. For example, if a member has had a week of bingeing, then she feels she has more of a right to group time: 'If only I get fatter I can have a lot of attention.' Or if a member was constantly losing weight she feels she has no right to time: 'If I am thin, then I am perfect and not needy, and not entitled.' And she over-eats to establish her right to a place in the group.

There's one thing that bothers me. Aren't you just organising a new set of rules for women to follow instead of a diet sheet?

In a sense yes, but I see them rather as helpful guidelines to let you trust your own bodily processes, and there is no way to break the rules.□

If you are interested in attending an introductory workshop run by Susie, please send your name and address on a postcard to C.E. Workshop, Women's Therapy Centre, 19A Hartham Road, London N7, or telephone 01-607 2864.



Alone of All Her Sex The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary

MARINA WARNER

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'Marina Warner exposes the process by which misogyny is rationalised, theologised and fed back into popular culture as absolute and abiding truth until woman becomes idealised in an impossible role—that of Virgin and mother—and is then put down for failing to live up to it. Every new height to which Mary is raised implies the inherent sinfulness and inadequacy of ordinary women. An exciting book . . . which it is hard to argue against and impossible to dismiss.' TIME OUT

What are little girls made of? Sugar and spice And all things nice, That's what little girls are made of.



'JUST LIKE A GIRL': How Girls Learn to be Women Sue Sharpe

Even in the 1970's the traditional lot of the working class girl has changed very little. Sue Sharpe describes and analyses how society still manages to put bars around women through a depressing conformity in their upbringing, education and beliefs, both at home and at school. But, many of the girls she spoke to — whose words are reproduced here — are conscious of needs outside the conventional roles of wife or mother. It is their awakening interest in their own futures that will sow the seeds of liberation for future generations.



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ODDS &

Women in Art

I am a Third year student studying a Fine Art's course at Leeds Polytechnic, and I am intending to do my thesis on "Woman in Art and Advertising", including their exploitation, role, etc. from the Renaissance to present times. Would it be possible for you to send me any information, books or essays written on the subject.

I hope you will be able to help as I feel very strongly about the way women are treated in the Art world.

Love
Michelle Hutton
Leeds

Images of Women: advertising in women's magazines by T. Millum published by Chatto & Windus 1975

For further information on articles about women and advertising contact the Women's Research & Resources Centre, 158 North Gower Street, NW1 (01-388 0882)

Some general books on women and art which you may find helpful:

Art and Sexual Politics, edited by Thomas B Hess and Linda Nochlin, published by Collier Macmillan.
Our Hidden Heritage by Eleanor Tufts, published by Paddington Press.

Through the Flower by Judy Chicago, published by Doubleday.

Women and the Fine Arts from 7th Century BC to the Twentieth Century BC by Clare Erskine Clements, published by Art Book Co.

Woman as Sex Object, studies in erotic art, 1730-1970, edited by Thomas B Hess and Linda Nochlin, published by Allen Lane

American Quilts and Coverlets by Carleton L Safford and Robert Bishop, published by Studio Vista (for illustrations of women's Art).

Periodicals:
Feminist Art Journal, 41 Montgomery Place, Brooklyn, New York NY 11215, USA.

Women Artists Newsletter, Box 3304, Grand Central Station, New York City, NY 10017, USA.
See also **Women and Society**, a critical review of the literature with a selected annotated bibliography, compiled and edited by Marie Barovik Rosenberg and Len V. Berstrom, published by Sage Publications.

SODS &

Pamphlets by Monica Sjo, from 18 Beaufort Rd, Bristol 8 (50p incl. p&p).

A complete list of articles on the arts published in **Spare Rib** is available if you send a stamped addressed envelope.

Up to Date Pill Info

This updated version of the 1974 leaflet explains how the contraceptive pill works, what brands contain what, and answers a list of 37 questions concerning periods on the pill, coming off it, and the side effects. Send a foolscap-sized envelope (stamped, addressed) to Pill Leaflet, 120 Addison Gardens, London W14 ODS.

Cohabitation and Social Security

I am trying to claim Social Security but have been told that it is very unlikely that I will receive any because my boyfriend who I live with is in full time work. I am looking hard for a job but how long I will be unemployed is impossible to know. In days of so called sex equality why should my boy friend be expected to pay my share of the rent. Has anyone any advice on the subject?

Yours sincerely
Angela Leslie
London W14

*See a handbook **Women and Social Security** produced by women in the Claimants Union. It tells you how to claim, how much you should get and how to appeal. It is available from East London Claimants Union, Dame Colet House, Ben Jonson Rd, London E1. Price 30p for claimants, 50p for others and 15p postage.

There are also two leaflets, **The Cohabitation Rule** and the **Guide to Supplementary Benefits Appeals**, both 5p from the Child Poverty Action Group, 1 Macklin St, London WC2. Write and ask for advice to the CPAG explaining your problem.

Incidentally there is a campaign which focusses around the right of all women in need to claim supplementary benefit. If you are interested, contact Financial and Legal Independence Campaign, 7 Killieser Avenue, London SW2, 01-671 2779.

INFO &

A Sex Book for Young Girls

As something of a last resort, could you possibly give some practical advice on the seemingly impossible problem of obtaining a sensible, comprehensive, preferably illustrated book on sex, suitable for a ten year old female? Sensible in that there's none of this, "then Daddy gets on top" crap; comprehensive in that it covers more than just the missionary position-lesbianism etc., plus sound biological fact minus the marriage emphasis; and illustrated because it's difficult with just talking about it, to know what sinks in and what stays, before moving on to more immediately relevant molehills.

S.A. Murrywerther-Budd
Herefordshire

***Boy Girl Man Woman** by Bent Claesson is probably the nearest in existence to what you are looking for: it has detailed sections on subjects such as homosexuality and lesbianism and is presented frankly and explicitly without moralistic undertones. However it is written by a man and is probably aimed more at boys than girls. As yet there are no sex manuals of this nature written by women. It is published by Calder and Boyars and is also in paperback.

Try also looking at **Our Bodies Ourselves** by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, with your daughter. This is excellent on all aspects of women's sexuality. You can obtain it by post from the stockists mentioned elsewhere on this page.

Women Painters and Discrimination

I am researching into the subject of women in art for my final year thesis. I would be interested to hear of any cases of discrimination against female painters by colleges, art schools or galleries.

Yours faithfully
Rosemary McIntosh
Department of Art and Design
Teesside Polytechnic
Middlesbrough
Cleveland

IDEAS

Feminist Bookshop

Is there a feminist bookshop in London - I'm desperate for feminist literature. I'm sure the women's movement must be generating written art as it's generating visual art, but it's hard to find.

Perhaps if any other **Spare Rib** readers have had more success than me in finding novels, poetry, etc., written by feminists, they could send me a list or get in touch.

Thanks
Judy Baine
29 Croxley Road
London W9

*The Women's Liberation Workshop has quite a large selection of books and poetry written by women, in addition to a number of theoretical books. You can obtain a list of these by writing to them at 38 Earlham Street, London WC2.

The following bookshops have a wide range relating to women's liberation topics, including many fictional and poetic writings by women:

Compendium, 240 Camden High Street, London NW1
Rising Free, 155 Drummond St, London NW1

Postal Parent

I wonder if any readers would be interested in becoming a 'postal parent' to a child in need overseas?

The cost is small - only £3.34 per month and the benefits great if it means that a child can then receive an education otherwise financially impossible.

We sponsor a little deaf girl in Kenya and receive regular reports of her progress.

There is also the possibility of non profit making holidays to either Kenya or India next year which will include three days at the child's project.

If anyone is interested please write to:

Action in Distress
139 Oxford Street
London W1

They will be pleased to supply you with further information with no further obligations

Yours faithfully
Margaret Hall
London W14



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